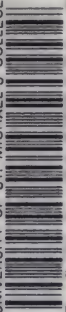


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Mrs Wingford



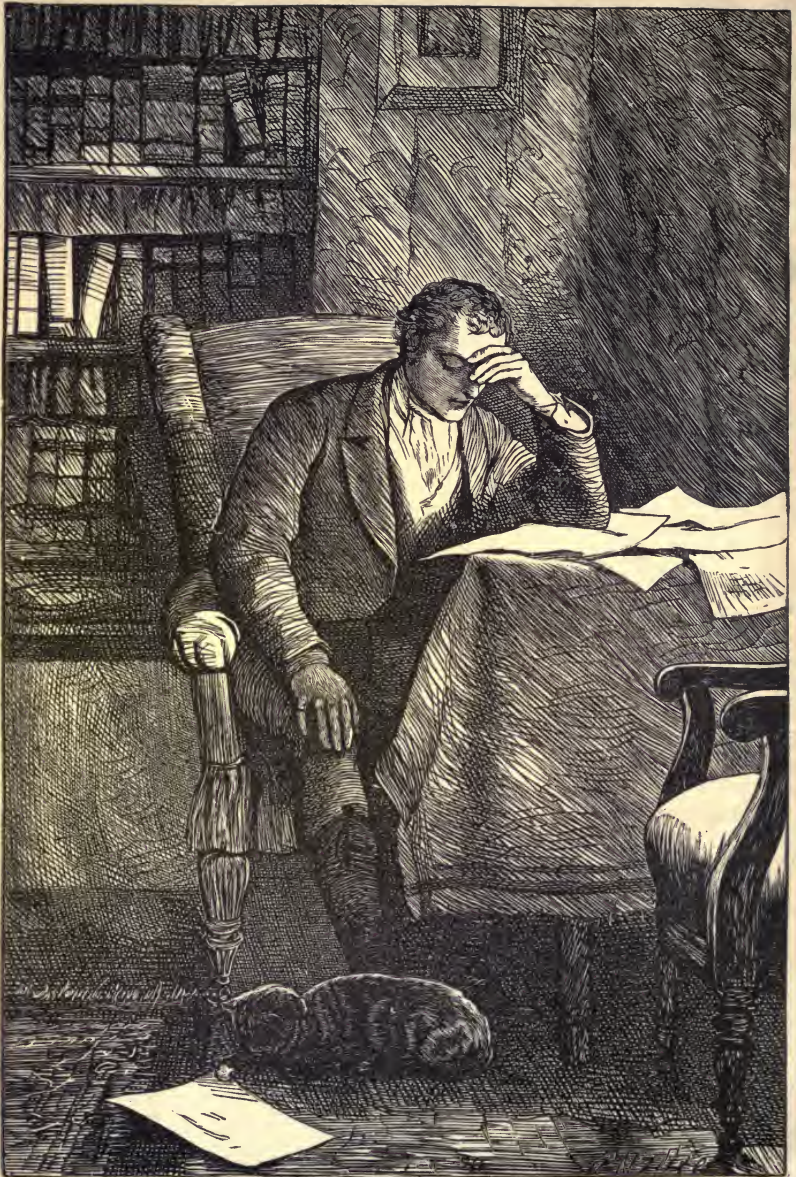
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THOMAS WINGFOLD.

THOMAS WINGFOLD,

CURATE.

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"ANNALS OF A QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD," "THE SEABOARD PARISH," ETC.



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Helen Lingard	I
II. Thomas Wingfold.....	8
III. The Diners.....	14
IV. Their Talk.....	20
V. A staggering Question.....	27
VI. The Curate in the Churchyard.....	34
VII. The Cousins	40
VIII. The Garden.....	47
IX. The Park.....	53
X. The Dwarfs	59
XI. The Curate at Home	66
XII. An Incident.....	74
XIII. A Report of Progress.....	79
XIV. Jeremy Taylor.....	83
XV. The Park Gate.....	87
XVI. The Attic.....	92
XVII. Polwarth's Plan.....	98
XVIII. Joseph Polwarth	106
XIX. The Conclusion of the whole Matter.....	117
XX. A Strange Sermon	122
XXI. A Thunderbolt.....	130

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. Leopold	136
XXIII. The Refuge	142
XXIV. Helen with a Secret.....	151
XXV. A Daylight Visit.....	156
XXVI. Leopold's Story.....	162
XXVII. Leopold's Story concluded.....	167
XXVIII. Sisterhood.....	175
XXIX. The Sick-Chamber.....	180
XXX. The Curate's Progress	187
XXXI. The Curate makes a Discovery.....	193
XXXII. Hopes	201
XXXIII. The Ride.....	206
XXXIV. Rachel and her Uncle.....	215
XXXV. A Dream.....	220
XXXVI. Another Sermon.....	229
XXXVII. Nursing.....	235
XXXVIII. Glaston and the Curate.....	242
XXXIX. The Linen-Draper.....	248
XL. Rachel.....	260
XLI. The Butterfly.....	270
XLII. The Commonplace.....	273
XLIII. Home again.....	281
XLIV. The Sheath.....	285
XLV. Invitation.....	292
XLVI. A Sermon to Helen.....	296
XLVII. A Sermon to Himself.....	304
XLVIII. Criticism.....	308
XLIX. A vanishing Glimmer.....	315
L. Let us Pray.....	320
LI. Two Letters.....	325
LII. Advice in the Dark.....	328
LIII. Intercession.....	334

CHAPTER	PAGE
LIV. Helen alone.....	337
LV. A Haunted Soul.....	342
LVI. Compelled Confidence.....	348
LVII. Willing Confidence.....	356
LVIII. The Curate's Counsel.....	360
LIX. Sleep.....	366
LX. Divine Service.....	372
LXI. A Shop in Heaven.....	381
LXII. Polwarth and Lingard	392
LXIII. The strong Man	405
LXIV. George and Leopold.....	412
LXV. Wingfold and Helen	417
LXVI. A Review.....	425
LXVII. A Sermon to Leopold.....	430
LXVIII. After the Sermon.....	443
LXIX. Bascombe and the Magistrate.....	450
LXX. The Confession.....	456
LXXI. The Mask.....	462
LXXII. Further Decision.....	468
LXXIII. The Curate and the Doctor.....	473
LXXIV. Helen and the Curate.....	481
LXXV. An Examination.:	488
LXXVI. Immortality	492
LXXVII. Passages from the Autobiography of the Wandering Jew.....	500
LXXVIII. The Wandering Jew.....	504
LXXIX. Do.	515
LXXX. Remarks.....	527
LXXXI. Struggles.....	531
LXXXII. The Lawn.....	538
LXXXIII. How Jesus spoke to Women.....	549
LXXXIV. Deliverance.....	557

CHAPTER	PAGE
LXXXV. The Meadow.....	562
LXXXVI. Rachel and Leopold.....	575
LXXXVII. The Blood-hound.....	581
LXXXVIII. The Blood-hound traversed.....	587
LXXXIX. The Bedside.....	598
XC. The Garden.....	608
XCI. The Departure.....	612
XCII. The Sunset.....	618
XCIII. An honest Spy.....	626
XCIV. What Helen heard.....	631
XCV. What Helen heard more....	637
XCVI. The Curate's Resolve.....	645
XCVII. Helen awake.....	653
XCVIII. Thou didst not leave.....	660

THOMAS WINGFOLD, CURATE.

CHAPTER I.

HELEN LINGARD.



SWIFT gray November wind had taken every chimney of the house for an organ-pipe, and was roaring in them all at once, quelling the more distant and varied noises of the woods, which moaned and surged like a sea. Helen Lingard had not been out all day. The morning, indeed, had been fine, but she had been writing a long letter to her brother Leopold at Cambridge, and had put off her walk in the neighboring park till after luncheon, and in the meantime the wind had risen, and brought with it a haze that threatened rain. She was in admirable health, had never had a day's illness in her life, was hardly more afraid of getting wet than a young farmer, and enjoyed wind, especially when she

was on horseback. Yet as she stood looking from her window, across a balcony where shivered more than one autumnal plant that ought to have been removed a week ago, out upon the old-fashioned garden and meadows beyond, where each lonely tree bowed with drifting garments—I was going to say like a suppliant, but it was *away* from its storming enemy—she did not feel inclined to go out. That she was healthy was no reason why she should be unimpressible, any more than that good temper should be a reason for indifference to the behavior of one's friend. She always felt happier in a new dress, when it was made to her mind and fitted her body; and when the sun shone she was lighter-hearted than when it rained: I had written *merrier*, but Helen was seldom merry, and had she been made aware of the fact and questioned why, would have answered—Because she so seldom saw reason. She was what all her friends called a sensible girl; but, as I say, that was no reason why she should be an insensible girl as well, and be subject to none of the influences of the weather. She did feel those influences, and therefore it was that she turned away from the window with the sense, rather than the conviction, that the fireside in her own room was rendered even more attractive by the unfriendly aspect of things outside and the roar in the chimney, which happily was not accompanied by a change in the current of the smoke.

The hours between luncheon and tea are confessedly dull, but dullness is not inimical to a certain kind of

comfort, and Helen liked to be that way comfortable. Nor had she ever yet been aware of self-rebuke because of the liking. Let us see what kind and degree of comfort she had in the course of an hour and a half attained. And in discovering this, I shall be able to present her to my reader with a little more circumstance.

She sat before the fire in a rather masculine posture. I would not willingly be rude, but the fact remains—a posture in which she would not, I think, have sat for her photograph—leaning back in a chintz-covered easy-chair, all the lines of direction about her parallel with the lines of the chair, her arms lying on its arms, and the fingers of each hand folded down over the end of each arm—square, straight, right-angled—gazing into the fire, with something of the look of a sage, but one who has made no discovery.

She had just finished the novel of the day, and was suffering a mild reaction—the milder, perhaps, that she was not altogether satisfied with the consummation. For the heroine had, after much sorrow and patient endurance, at length married a man whom she could not help knowing to be not worth having. For the author even knew it, only such was his reading of life, and such his theory of artistic duty, that what it was a disappointment to Helen to peruse, it seemed to have been a comfort to him to write. Indeed her dissatisfaction went so far, that, although the fire kept burning away in perfect content before her, enhanced by the bellowing complaint of the wind in the chimney, she yet came nearer thinking than she had ever been in her life.

Now thinking, especially to one who tries it for the first time, is seldom or never a quite comfortable operation, and hence Helen was very near becoming actually uncomfortable. She was even on the borders of making the unpleasant discovery that the business of life—and that not only for north-pole expeditions, African explorers, pyramid-inspectors, and such like, but for every man and woman born into the blindness of the planet, is to discover—after which discovery there is little more comfort to be had of the sort with which Helen was chiefly conversant. But she escaped for the time after a very simple and primitive fashion, although it was indeed a narrow escape.

Let me not be misunderstood, however, and supposed to imply that Helen was dull in faculty, or that she contributed nothing to the bubbling of the intellectual pool in the social gatherings at Glaston. Far from it. When I say that she came near thinking, I say more for her than any but the few who know what thinking is will understand, for that which chiefly distinguishes man from those he calls the lower animals is the faculty he most rarely exercises. True, Helen supposed she could think—like other people, because the thoughts of other people had passed through her in tolerable plenty, leaving many a phantom conclusion behind; but this was *their* thinking, not hers. She had thought no more than was necessary now and then to the persuasion that she saw what a sentence meant, after which her acceptance or rejection of what was contained in it, never more than lukewarm, depended solely upon its relation

to what she had somehow or other, she could seldom have told how, come to regard as the proper style of opinion to hold upon things in general.

The social matrix which up to this time had ministered to her development, had some relations with Mayfair, it is true, but scanty ones indeed with the universe; so that her present condition was like that of the common bees, every one of which Nature fits for a queen, but its nurses prevent from growing one by providing for it a cell too narrow for the unrolling of royalty, and supplying it with food not potent enough for the nurture of the ideal—with this difference, however, that the cramped and stunted thing comes out, if no queen, then a working bee, and Helen, who might be both, was neither yet. If I were at liberty to mention the books on her table, it would give a few of my readers no small help towards the settling of her position in the "valued file" of the young women of her generation; but there are reasons against it.

She was the daughter of an officer, who, her mother dying when she was born, committed her to the care of a widowed aunt, and almost immediately left for India, where he rose to high rank, and somehow or other amassed a considerable fortune, partly through his marriage with a Hindoo lady, by whom he had one child, a boy some three years younger than Helen. When he died, he left his fortune equally divided between the two children.

Helen was now three-and-twenty, and her own mistress. Her appearance suggested Norwegian blood, for

she was tall, blue-eyed, and dark-haired—but fair-skinned, with regular features, and an over still—some who did not like her said *hard*—expression of countenance. No one had ever called her *Nelly*; yet she had long remained a girl, lingering on the broken borderland after several of her school companions had become young matrons. Her drawing master, a man of some observation and insight, used to say Miss Lingard would wake up somewhere about forty.

The cause of her so nearly touching the borders of thought this afternoon, was—that she became suddenly aware of feeling bored. Now Helen was even seldomer bored than merry, and this time she saw no reason for it, neither had any person to lay the blame upon. She might have said it was the weather, but the weather had never done it before. Nor could it be want of society, for George Bascombe was to dine with them. So was the curate, but he did not count for much. Neither was she weary of herself. That, indeed, might be only a question of time, for the most complete egotist, Julius Cæsar, or Napoleon Buonaparte, must at length get weary of his paltry self; but Helen, from the slow rate of her expansion, was not old enough yet. Nor was she in any special sense wrapt up in herself: it was only that she had never yet broken the shell which continues to shut in so many human-chickens, long after they imagine themselves citizens of the real world.

Being somewhat bored then, and dimly aware that to be bored was to be out of harmony with something or other, Helen was on the verge of thinking,

but, as I have said, escaped the snare in a very direct and simple fashion : she went fast asleep, and never woke till her maid brought her the cup of kitchen-tea from which the inmates of some houses derive the strength to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER II.

THOMAS WINGFOLD.



THE morning, whose afternoon was thus stormy, had been fine, and the curate went out for a walk. Had it been just as stormy, however, he would have gone all the same. Not that he was a great walker, or indeed fond of exercise of any sort, and his walking, as an Irishman might say, was half-sitting—on stiles and stones and fallen trees. He was not in bad health, he was not lazy, or given to self-preservation, but he had little impulse to activity of any sort. The springs in his well of life did not seem to flow quite fast enough.

He strolled through Osterfield park, and down the deep descent to the river, where, chilly as it was, he seated himself upon a large stone on the bank, and knew that he was there, and that he had to answer to *Thomas Wingfold*; but why he was there, and why he

was not called something else, he did not know. On each side of the stream rose a steeply sloping bank, on which grew many fern-bushes, now half-withered, and the sunlight upon them, this November morning, seemed as cold as the wind that blew about their golden and green fronds. Over a rocky bottom the stream went—talking rather than singing—down the valley towards the town, where it seemed to linger a moment to embrace the old abbey church, before it set out on its leisurely slide through the low level to the sea. Its talk was chilly, and its ripples, which came half from the obstructions in its channel below, and half from the wind that ruffled it above, were not smiles, but wrinkles rather—even in the sunshine. Thomas felt cold himself, but the cold was of the sort that comes from the look rather than the feel of things. He did not, however, much care how he felt—not enough certainly to have made him put on a great coat: he was not deeply interested in himself. With his stick, a very ordinary bit of oak, he kept knocking pebbles into the water, and listlessly watching them splash. The wind blew, the sun shone, the water ran, the ferns waved, the clouds went drifting over his head—but he never looked up, or took any notice of the doings of Mother Nature at her housework: every thing seemed to him to be doing only what it had got to do, because it had got it to do, and not because it cared about it, or had any end in doing it. For he, like every other man, could read nature only by his own lamp, and this was very much how he had hitherto responded to the demands made upon him.

His life had not been a very interesting one, although early passages in it had been painful. He had done fairly well at Oxford : it had been expected of him, and he had answered expectation ; he had not distinguished himself, nor cared to do so. He had known from the first that he was intended for the church, and had not objected, but received it as his destiny—had even, in dim obedience, kept before his mental vision the necessity of yielding to the heights and hollows of the mould into which he was being thrust. But he had taken no great interest in the matter.

The church was to him an ancient institution of such approved respectability that it was able to communicate it, possessing emoluments, and requiring observances. He had entered her service ; she was his mistress, and in return for the narrow shelter, humble fare, and not quite too shabby garments she allotted him, he would perform her hests—in the spirit of a servant who abideth not in the house forever. He was now six-and-twenty years of age, and had never dreamed of marriage, or even been troubled with a thought of its unattainable remoteness. He did not philosophise much upon life, or his position in it, taking everything with a cold, hopeless kind of acceptance, and laying no claim to courage, devotion, or even bare suffering. He had a certain dull prejudice in favor of honesty, would not have told the shadow of a lie to be made archbishop of Canterbury, and yet was so uninstructed in the things that constitute practical honesty that some of his opinions would have considerably astonished St.

Paul. He liked reading the prayers, for the making of them vocal in church was pleasant to him, and he had a not unmusical voice. He visited the sick—with some repugnance it is true, but without delay, and spoke to them such religious commonplaces as occurred to him, depending mainly on the prayers belonging to their condition for the right performance of his office. He never thought about being a gentleman, but always behaved like one.

I suspect that at this time there lay somewhere in his mind, keeping generally well out of sight however, that is, below the skin of his consciousness, the unacknowledged feeling that he had been hardly dealt with. But at no time even when it rose plainest, would he have dared to add—*by Providence*. Had the temptation come, he would have banished it and the feeling together.

He did not read much, browsed over his newspaper at breakfast with a polite curiosity, sufficient to season the loneliness of his slice of fried bacon, and took more interest in some of the naval intelligence than in any thing else. Indeed it would have been difficult for himself even to say in what he did take a large interest. When leisure awoke a question as to how he should employ it, he would generally take up his Horace and read aloud one of his more mournful odes—with such attention to the rhythm, I must add, as, although plentiful enough among scholars in respect of the dead letter, is rarely found with them in respect of the living vocal utterance.

Nor had he now sat long upon his stone, heedless of the world's preparation for winter, before he began re-

peating to himself the poet's *Æquam memento rebus in arduis*, which he had been trying much, but with small success, to reproduce in similar English cadences, moved thereto in part by the success of Tennyson in his *O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies*—a thing as yet alone in the language, so far as I know. It was perhaps a little strange that the curate should draw the strength of which he was most conscious from the pages of a poet whose hereafter was chiefly serviceable to him—in virtue of its unsubstantiality and poverty, the dreamlike thinness of its reality—in enhancing the pleasures of the world of sun and air, cooling shade and songful streams, the world of wine and jest, of forms that melted more slowly from encircling arms, and eyes that did not so swiftly fade and vanish in the distance. Yet when one reflects but for a moment on the poverty-stricken expectations of Christians from their hereafter, I cease to wonder at Wingfold; for human sympathy is lovely and pleasant, and if a Christian priest and a pagan poet feel much in the same tone concerning the affairs of the universe, why should they not comfort each other by sitting down together in the dust?

“No hair it boots thee whether from Inachus
Ancient descended, or, of the poorest born,
Thy being drags, all bare and roofless—
Victim the same to the heartless Orcus.

All are on one road driven; for each of us
The urn is tossed, and, later or earlier,
The lot will drop and all be sentenced
Into the boat of eternal exile.”

Having thus far succeeded with these two stanzas, Wingfold rose, a little pleased with himself, and climbed the bank above him, wading through mingled sun and wind and ferns—so careless of their shivering beauty and their coming exile that a watcher might have said the prospect of one day leaving behind him the shows of this upper world could have no part in the curate's sympathy with Horacé.

CHAPTER III.

THE DINERS.



RS. RAMSHORN, Helen's aunt, was past the middle age of woman ; had been handsome and pleasing ; had long ceased to be either ; had but sparingly recognized the fact, yet had recognized it, and felt aggrieved. Hence in part it was that her mouth had gathered that peevish and wronged expression which tends to produce a moral nausea in the beholder. If she had but known how much uglier in the eyes of her own fellow-mortals her own discontent had made her, than the severest operation of the laws of mortal decay could have done, she might have tried to think less of her wrongs and more of her privileges. As it was, her own face wronged her own heart, which was still womanly, and capable of much pity—seldom exercised. Her husband had been dean of Halystone, a man of sufficient weight of character to have the right influence in the formation of his wife's. He had left her tolerably comfortable as to circumstances, but childless. She loved Helen, whose even imperturbability had by mere weight, as it

might seem, gained such a power over her that she was really mistress in the house without either of them knowing it.

Naturally desirous of keeping Helen's fortune in the family, and having, as I say, no son of her own, she had yet not far to look to find a cousin capable, as she might well imagine, of rendering himself acceptable to the heiress. He was the son of her younger sister, married, like herself, to a dignitary of the church, a canon of a northern cathedral. This youth, therefore, George Bascombe by name, whose visible calling at present was to eat his way to the bar, she often invited to Glaston; and on this Friday afternoon he was on his way from London to spend the Saturday and Sunday with the two ladies. The cousins liked each other, had not had more of each other's society than was favorable to their aunt's designs, who was far too prudent to have made as yet any reference to them, and stood altogether in as suitable a relative position for falling in love with each other as Mrs. Ramshorn could well have desired. Her chief, almost her only, uneasiness arose from the important and but too evident fact that Helen Lingard was not a girl of the sort to fall readily in love. That, however, was of no consequence, provided it did not come in the way of her marrying her cousin, who, her aunt felt confident, was better fitted to rouse her dormant affections than any other youth she had ever seen or was ever likely to see. Upon this occasion she had asked Thomas Wingfold to meet him, partly with the design that he should act as a foil to her nephew, partly

in order to do her duty by the church, to which she felt herself belong not as a lay member, but in some undefined professional capacity, in virtue of her departed dean. Wingfold had but lately come to the parish, and, as he was merely curate, she had not been in haste to invite him. On the other hand, he was the only clergyman officiating in the abbey church, which was grand and old, with a miserable living and a non-resident rector. He, to do him justice, paid nearly the amount of the tithes in salary to his curate, and spent the rest on the church material, of which, for certain reasons, he retained the incumbency, the presentation to which belonged to his own family.

The curate presented himself at the dinner-hour in Mrs. Ramshorn's drawing-room, looking like any other gentleman, satisfied with his share in the administration of things, and affecting nothing of the professional either in dress, manner, or tone. Helen saw him for the first time in private life, and, as she had expected, saw nothing remarkable—a man who looked about thirty, was a little over the middle height, and well enough constructed as men go, had a good forehead, a questionable nose, clear gray eyes, long, mobile, sensitive mouth, large chin, pale complexion, and straight black hair, and might have been a lawyer just as well as a clergyman. A keener—that is, a more interested—eye than hers might have discovered traces of suffering in the forms of the wrinkles which, as he talked, would now and then flit like ripples over his forehead; but Helen's eyes seldom did more than slip over the faces presented to her; and

had it been otherwise, who could be expected to pay much regard to Thomas Wingfold when George Bascombe was present? There, indeed, stood a man by the corner of the mantel-piece!—tall and handsome as an Apollo and strong as the young Hercules, dressed in the top of the plainest fashion, self-satisfied, but not offensively so, good-natured, ready to smile, as clean in conscience, apparently, and as large in sympathy, as his shirt-front. Everybody who knew him counted George Bascombe a genuine good fellow, and George himself knew little to the contrary, while Helen knew nothing.

One who had only chanced to get a glimpse of her in her own room, as in imagination my reader has done, would hardly have recognized her again in the drawing-room. For in her own room she was but as she appeared to herself in her mirror—dull, inanimate; but in the drawing-room her reflection from living eyes and presences served to stir up what waking life was in her. When she spoke, her face dawned with a clear, although not warm light; and although it must be owned that when it was at rest, the same over-stillness, amounting almost to dulness, the same seeming immobility, ruled as before, yet, even when she was not speaking, the rest was often broken by a smile—a genuine one, for although there was much that was stiff, there was nothing artificial about Helen. Neither was there much of the artificial about her cousin; for his good-nature and his smile, and whatever else appeared upon him, were all genuine enough—the only thing in this respect not quite satisfactory to the morally fastidious man being

his tone in speaking. Whether he had caught it at the university, or amongst his father's clerical friends, or in the professional society he now frequented, I can not tell, but it had been manufactured somewhere—after a large, scrolly kind of pattern, sounding well-bred and dignified. I wonder how many speak with the voices that really belong to them.

Plainly, to judge from the one Bascombe used, he was accustomed to lay down the law, but in gentlemanly fashion, and not as if he cared a bit about the thing in question himself. By the side of his easy carriage, his broad chest, and towering Greek-shaped head, Thomas Wingfold dwindled almost to vanishing—in a word, looked nobody. And besides his inferiority in size and self-presentment, he had a slight hesitation of manner, which seemed to anticipate, if not to court, the subordinate position which most men, and most women too, were ready to assign him. He said, "*Don't you think?*" far oftener than "*I think,*" and was always more ready to fix his attention upon the strong points of an opponent's argument than to reassert his own in slightly altered phrase like most men, or even in fresh forms like a few; hence—self-assertion, either modestly worn like a shirt of fine chain-armor, or gaunt and obtrusive like plates of steel, being the strength of the ordinary man—what could the curate appear but defenceless, therefore weak, and therefore contemptible? The truth is, he had less self-conceit than a mortal's usual share, and was not yet possessed of any opinions

interesting enough to himself to seem worth defending with any approach to vivacity.

Bascombe and he bowed in response to their introduction with proper indifference, after a moment's solemn pause exchanged a sentence or two which resembled an exercise in the proper use of a foreign language, and then gave what attention Englishmen are capable of before dinner to the two ladies—the elder of whom, I may just mention, was dressed in black velvet with heavy Venetian lace, and the younger in black silk with old Honiton. Neither of them did much towards enlivening the conversation. Mrs. Ramshorn, whose dinner had as yet gained in interest with her years, sat peevishly longing for its arrival, but cast every now and then a look of mild satisfaction upon her nephew, which, however, while it made her eyes sweeter, did not much alter the expression of her mouth. Helen fancied she improved the arrangement of a few greenhouse flowers in an ugly vase on the table.

At length the butler appeared, the curate took Mrs. Ramshorn, and the cousins followed—making, in the judgment of the butler as he stood in the hall and the housekeeper as she peered from the baize-covered door that led to the still-room, as handsome a couple as mortal eyes need wish to see. They looked nearly of an age, the lady the more stately, the gentleman the more graceful, or, perhaps rather, *elegant*, of the two.

CHAPTER IV.

THEIR TALK.

DURING dinner Bascombe had the talk mostly to himself, and rattled well, occasionally rebuked by his aunt for some remark which might to a clergyman appear objectionable; nor as a partisan was she altogether satisfied with the curate that he did not seem inclined to take clerical exception. He ate his dinner, quietly responding to Bascombe's sallies—which had usually more of vivacity than keenness, more of good spirits than wit—with a curious flickering smile or a single word of agreement. It might have seemed that he was humoring a younger man, but the truth was the curate had not yet seen cause for opposing him.

How any friend could have come to send Helen poetry I can not imagine, but that very morning she had received by post a small volume of verse, which, although just out, and by an unknown author, had already been talked of in what are called literary circles. Wingfold had read some extracts from the book that same morning, and was therefore not quite unprepared

when Helen asked him if he had seen it. He suggested that the poems, if the few lines he had seen made a fair sample, were rather of the wailful order.

"If there is one thing I despise more than another," said Bascombe, "it is to hear a man, a fellow with legs and arms, pour out his griefs into the bosom of that most discreet of confidantes, Society, bewailing his hard fate, and calling upon youths and maidens to fill their watering-pots with tears, and with him water the sorrowful pansies and undying rue of the race. I believe I am quoting."

"I think you must be, George," said Helen. "I never knew you venture so near the edge of poetry before."

"Ah, that is all you know of me, Miss Lingard!" returned Bascombe. "—And then," he resumed, turning again to Wingfold, "what is it they complain of? That some girl preferred a better man, perhaps, or that a penny paper once told the truth about their poetry."

"Or it may be only that it is their humor to be sad," said Wingfold. "But don't you think," he continued, "it is hardly worth while to be indignant with them? Their verses are a relief to them, and do nobody any harm."

"They do all the boys and girls harm that read them, and themselves who write them more harm than anybody, confirming them in tearful habits, and teaching eyes unused to weep. I quote again, I believe, but from whom I am innocent.—If I ever had a grief, I should have along with it the decency to keep it to myself."

"I don't doubt you would, George," said his cousin, who seemed more playfully inclined than usual. "But," she added, with a smile, "would your silence be voluntary or enforced?"

"What!" returned Bascombe, "you think I could not plain my woes to the moon? Why not I as well as another? I could roar you as 'twere any nightingale."

"You have had your sorrows, then, George?"

"Never any thing worse yet than a tailor's bill, Helen, and I hope you won't provide me with any. I am not in love with decay.—I remember a fellow at Trinity, the merriest of all our set at a wine-party, who, alone with his ink-pot, was for ever enacting the part of the unheeded poet, complaining of the hard hearts and tuneless ears of his generation. I went into his room once, and found him with the tears running down his face, a pot of stout half empty on the table, and his den all but opaque with tobacco-smoke, reciting with sobs—I had repeated the lines so often before they ceased to amuse me that I can never forget them—

'Heard'st thou a quiver and clang?
In thy sleep did it make thee start?
'Twas a chord in twain that sprang—
But the lyre-shell was my heart.'

He took a pull at the stout, laid his head on the table, and sobbed like a locomotive."

"But it's not very bad—not bad at all, so far as I see," said Helen, who had a woman's weakness for the side attacked, in addition to a human partiality for fair play.

“No, not bad at all—for absolute nonsense,” said Bascombe.

“He had been reading Heine,” said Wingfold.

“And burlesquing him,” returned Bascombe. “Fancy hearing one of the fellow’s heart-strings crack, and taking it for a string of his fiddle in the press. By the way, what are the heart-strings? Have they any anatomical synonym? But I have no doubt it was good poetry.”

“Do you think poetry and common sense necessarily opposed to each other?” asked Wingfold.

“I confess a leaning to that opinion,” replied Bascombe, with a half-conscious smile.

“What do you say of Horace, now?” suggested Wingfold.

“Unfortunately for me, you have mentioned the one poet for whom I have any respect. But what I like in him is just his common sense. He never cries over spilt milk, even if the jug be broken to the bargain. But common sense would be just as good in prose as in verse.”

“Possibly; but what we have of it in Horace would never have reached us but for the forms into which he has cast it. How much more enticing acorns in the cup are!—I was watching two children picking them up to-day.”

“That may be; there have always been more children than grown men,” returned Bascombe. “For my part, I would sweep away all illusions, and get at the heart of the affair.”

"But," said Wingfold, with the look of one who, as he tries to say it, is seeing a thing for the first time, "does not the acorn-cup belong to the acorn? May not some of what you call illusions be the finer, or at least more ethereal, qualities of the thing itself? You do not object to music in church, for instance?"

Bascombe was on the point of saying that he objected to it nowhere except in church, but for his aunt's sake, or rather for his own sake in his aunt's eyes, he restrained himself, and uttered his feelings only in a peculiar smile, of import so mingled that its meaning was illegible ere it had quivered along his lip and vanished.

"I am no metaphysician," he said, and Wingfold accepted the dismissal of the subject.

Little passed between the two men over their wine; and as neither of them cared to drink more than a couple of glasses, they soon rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Ramshorn was taking her usual forty winks in her arm-chair, and their entrance did not disturb her. Helen was turning over some music.

"I am looking for a song for you, George," she said. "I want Mr. Wingfold to hear you sing, lest he should take you for a man of stone and lime."

"Never mind looking," returned her cousin. "I will sing one you have never heard."

And seating himself at the piano, he sang the following verses. They were his own, a fact he would probably have allowed to creep out had they met with more sympathy. His voice was a fine bass one, full of tone.

“ Each man has his lampful, his lampful of oil ;
He may dull its glimmer with sorrow and toil ;
He may leave it unlit, and let it dry,
Or wave it aloft, and hold it high ;
For mine, it shall burn with a fearless flame
In the front of the darkness that has no name.

“ Sunshine and Wind !—are ye there ? Ho ! ho !
Are ye comrades or lords, as ye shine and blow ?
I care not, I ! I will lift my head
Till ye shine and blow on my grassy bed.
See, brother Sun, I am shining too !
Wind, I am living as well as you !

“ Though the sun go out like a vagrant spark,
And his daughter planets are left in the dark,
I care not, I ! For why should I care ?
I shall be hurtless, nor here nor there.
Sun and Wind, let us shine and shout,
For the day draws nigh when we all go out !”

“ I don't like the song,” said Helen, wrinkling her brows a little. “ It sounds—well, heathenish.”

She would, I fear, have said nothing of the sort, being used to that kind of sound from her cousin, had not a clergyman been present. Yet she said it from no hypocrisy, but simple regard for his professional feelings.

“ I sang it for Mr. Wingfold,” returned Bascombe.

“ It would have been a song after Horace's own heart.”

“ Don't you think,” rejoined the curate, “ the defiant tone of your song would have been strange to him ? I confess that what I find chiefly attractive in Horace is his sad submission to the inevitable.”

“ Sad ?” echoed Bascombe.

“ Don't you think so ?”

"No. He makes the best of it, and as merrily as he can."


"*As he can*, I grant you," said Wingfold.

Here Mrs. Ramshorn woke, and the subject was dropped, leaving Mr. Wingfold in some perplexity as to this young man and his talk, and what the phenomenon signified. Was heathenism after all secretly cherished, and about to become fashionable in English society? He saw little of its phases, and for what he knew it might be so.

Helen sat down at the piano. Her time was perfect, and she never blundered a note. She played well and woodenly, and had for her reward a certain wooden satisfaction in her own performance. The music she chose was good of its kind, but had more to do with the instrument than the feelings, and was more dependent upon execution than expression. Bascombe yawned behind his handkerchief, and Wingfold gazed at the profile of the player, wondering how, with such fine features and complexion, with such a fine-shaped and well-set head, her face should be so far short of interesting. It seemed a face that had no story.

CHAPTER V.

A STAGGERING QUESTION.

T was time the curate should take his leave, Bascombe would go out with him and have his last cigar. The wind had fallen, and the moon was shining. A vague sense of contrast came over Wingfold, and as he stepped on the pavement from the threshold of the high gates of wrought iron, he turned involuntarily and looked back at the house. It was of red brick, and flat-faced, in the style of Queen Anne's time, so that the light could do nothing with it in the way of shadow, and dwelt only on the dignity of its unpretentiousness. But aloft over its ridge the moon floated in the softest, loveliest blue, with just a cloud here and there to show how blue it was, and a sparkle where its blueness took fire in a star. It was autumn, almost winter, below, and the creepers that clung to the house waved in the now gentle wind like the straggling tresses of old age; but above was a sky that might have overhung the last melting of spring into summer. At the end of the street rose the great square tower of the church, seeming larger than in the

daylight. There was something in it all that made the curate feel there ought to be more—as if the night knew something he did not ; and he yielded himself to its invasion.

His companion having carefully lighted his cigar all round its extreme periphery, took it from his mouth, regarded its glowing end with a smile of satisfaction, and burst into a laugh. It was not a scornful laugh, neither was it a merry or a humorous laugh : it was one of satisfaction and amusement.

“ Let me have a share in the fun,” said the curate.

“ You have it,” said his companion—rudely, indeed, but not quite offensively, and put his cigar in his mouth again.

Wingfold was not one to take umbrage easily. He was not important enough in his own eyes for that, but he did not choose to go farther.

“ That’s a fine old church,” he said, pointing to the dark mass invading the blue—so solid, yet so clear in outline.

“ I am glad the mason-work is to your mind,” returned Bascombe, almost compassionately. “ It must be some satisfaction, perhaps consolation, to you.”

Before he had thus concluded the sentence a little scorn had crept into his tone.

“ You make some allusion which I do not quite apprehend,” said the curate.

“ Now, I am going to be honest with you,” said Bascombe abruptly, and stopping, he turned square towards his companion, and took the full-flavored Havana

from his lips. "I like you," he went on, "for you seem reasonable; and besides, a man ought to speak out what he thinks. So here goes! Tell me honestly—do you believe one word of all that?"

And he in his turn pointed in the direction of the great tower.

The curate was taken by surprise, and made no answer: it was as if he had received a sudden blow in the face. Recovering himself presently, however, he sought room to pass the question without direct encounter.

"How came the thing there?" he said, once more indicating the church-tower.

"By faith, no doubt," answered Bascombe, laughing, "—but not your faith; no, nor the faith of any of the last few generations."

"There are more churches built now, ten times over, than in any former period of our history."

"True; but of what sort? All imitation—never an original amongst them all!"

"If they had found out the right way, why change it?"

"Good! But it is rather ominous for the claim of a divine origin to your religion that it should be the only thing that in these days takes the crab's move—backwards. You are indebted to your forefathers for your would-be belief, as well as for their genuine churches. You hardly know what your belief is. There is my aunt—as good a specimen as I know of what you call a Christian!—so accustomed is she to think and speak

too after the forms of what you heard my cousin call heathenism, that she never would have discovered, had she been as wide awake as she was sound asleep, that the song I sung was anything but a good Christian ballad."

"Pardon me ; I think you are wrong there."

"What ! did you never remark how these Christian people, who profess to believe that their great man has conquered death, and all that rubbish—did you never observe the way they look if the least allusion is made to death, or the eternity they say they expect beyond it ? Do they not stare as if you had committed a breach of manners ? Religion itself the same way : as much as you like about the church, but don't mention Christ ! At the same time, to do them justice, it is only of death in the abstract they decline to hear ; they will listen to the news of the death of a great and good man without any such emotion. Look at the poetry of death—I mean the way Christian poets write of it ! A dreamless sleep they call it—the bourne from whence, etc.—an endless separation—the night that knows no morning—the sleep that knows no waking. "She is gone forever !" cries the mother over her daughter. And that is why such things are not to be mentioned, because in their hearts they have no hope, and in their minds no courage to face the facts of existence. We haven't the pluck of the old fellows, who, that they might look Death himself in the face without dismay, accustomed themselves, even at their banquets, to the sight of his most loathsome handiwork, his most significant symbol—and en-

joyed their wine the better for it!—your friend Horace, for instance.”

“But your aunt now would never consent to such an interpretation of her opinions. Nor do I allow that it is fair.”

“My dear sir, if there is one thing I pride myself upon, it is fair play, and I grant you at once she would not. But I am speaking, not of creeds, but of beliefs. And I assert that the forms of common Christian speech regarding death come nearer those of Horace than your saint, the old Jew, Saul of Tarsus.”

It did not occur to Wingfold that people generally speak from the surfaces, not the depths, of their minds, even when those depths are moved; nor yet that possibly Mrs. Ramshorn was not the best type of a Christian, even in his soft-walking congregation. In fact, nothing came into his mind with which to meet what Bascombe said—the real force whereof he could not help feeling—and he answered nothing. His companion followed his apparent yielding with fresh pressure.

“In truth,” he said, “I do not believe that *you* believe more than an atom here and there of what you profess. I am confident you have more good sense by a great deal.”

“I am sorry to find that you place good sense above good faith, Mr. Bascombe; but I am obliged by your good opinion, which, as I read it, amounts to this—that I am one of the greatest humbugs you have the misfortune to be acquainted with.”

“Ha! ha! ha! No, no; I don't say that. I know so

well how to make allowance for the prejudices a man has inherited from foolish ancestors, and which have been instilled into him, as well, with his earliest nourishment, both bodily and mentally. But—come now—I do love open dealing—I am myself open as the day—did you not take to the church as a profession, in which you might eat a piece of bread—as somebody says in your own blessed Bible—dry enough bread it may be, for the old lady is not over-generous to her younger children—still a gentlemanly sort of livelihood?”

Wingfold held his peace. It was incontestably with such a view that he had signed the articles and sought holy orders,—and that without a single question as to truth or reality in either act.

“Your silence is honesty, Mr. Wingfold, and I honor you for it,” said Bascombe. “It is an easy thing for a man in another profession to speak his mind, but silence such as yours, casting a shadow backward over your past, requires courage : I honor you, sir.”

As he spoke, he laid his hand on Wingfold’s shoulder with the grasp of an athlete.

“Can the sherry have any thing to do with it?” thought the curate. The fellow was, or seemed to be, years younger than himself ! It was an assurance unimaginable—yet there it stood—six feet of it good ! He glanced at the church-tower. It had not vanished in mist ! It still made its own strong, clear mark on the eternal blue !

“I must not allow you to mistake my silence, Mr. Bascombe,” he answered the same moment. “It is not

easy to reply to such demands all at once. It is not easy to say in times like these, and at a moment's notice, what or how much a man believes. But whatever my answer might be had I time to consider it, my silence must at least not be interpreted to mean that I do *not* believe as my profession indicates. That, at all events, would be untrue."

"Then I am to understand, Mr. Wingfold, that you neither believe nor disbelieve the tenets of the church whose bread you eat?" said Bascombe, with the air of a reprover of sin.

"I decline to place myself between the horns of any such dilemma," returned Wingfold, who was now more than a little annoyed at his persistency in forcing his way within the precincts of another's personality.

"It is but one more proof—more than was necessary—to convince me that the whole system is a lie—a lie of the worst sort, seeing it may prevail even to the self-deception of a man otherwise remarkable for honesty and directness. Good-night, Mr. Wingfold."

With lifted hats, but no hand-shaking, the men parted.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CURATE IN THE CHURCHYARD.



ASCOMBE was chagrined to find that the persuasive eloquence with which he hoped soon to play upon the convictions of jurymen at his own sweet will had not begotten even communicativeness, not to say confidence, in the mind of a parson who knew himself fooled, and partly that it gave him cause to doubt how far it might be safe to urge his attack in another and to him more important quarter. He had a passion for convincing people, this Hercules of the new world. He sauntered slowly back to his aunt's, husbanding his cigar a little, and looking up at the moon now and then,—not to admire the marvel of her shining, but to think yet again what a fit type of an effete superstition she was, in that she retained her power of fascination even in death.

Wingfold walked slowly away, with his eyes on the ground gliding from under his footsteps. It was only eleven o'clock, but this the oldest part of the town seemed already asleep. They had not met a single person on their way, and hardly seen a lighted window.

But he felt unwilling to go home, which at first he was fain to attribute to his having drunk a little more wine than was good for him, whence this feverishness and restlessness so strange to his experience. In the churchyard, on the other side of which his lodging lay, he turned aside from the flagged path and sat down upon a gravestone, where he was hardly seated ere he began to discover that it was something else than the wine which had made him feel so uncomfortable. What an objectionable young fellow that Bascombe was!—presuming and arrogant to a degree rare, he hoped, even in a profession for which insolence was a qualification. What rendered it worse was that his good-nature—and indeed every one of his gifts, which were all of the popular order—was subservient to an assumption not only self-satisfied but obtrusive! And yet—and yet—the objectionable character of his self-constituted judge being clear as the moon to the mind of the curate, was there not something in what he had said? This much remained undeniable at least, that when the very existence of the church was denounced as a humbug in the hearing of one who ate her bread, and was her pledged servant, his very honesty had kept that man from speaking a word in her behalf! Something must be wrong somewhere: was it in him or in the church? In him assuredly, whether in her or not. For had he not been unable to utter the simple assertion that he did believe the things which, as the mouth-piece of the church, he had been speaking in the name of the truth every Sunday—would again speak the day after to-mor-

row? And now the point was—*why* could he not say he believed them? He had never consciously questioned them; he did not question them now; and yet, when a forward, overbearing young infidel of a lawyer put it to him—plump—as if he were in the witness-box, or rather indeed in the dock—did he believe a word of what the church had set him to teach?—a strange something—was it honesty?—if so, how dishonest had he not hitherto been!—was it diffidence?—if so, how presumptuous his position in that church!—this nondescript something seemed to raise a “viewless obstruction” in his throat, and, having thus rendered him the first moment incapable of speaking out like a man, had taught him the next—had it?—to quibble—“like a priest,” the lawyer-fellow would doubtless have said! He must go home and study Paley—or perhaps Butler’s Analogy—he owed the church something, and ought to be able to strike a blow for her. Or would not Leighton be better? Or a more modern writer—say Neander, or Coleridge, or perhaps Dr. Liddon? There were thousands able to fit him out for the silencing of such foolish men as this Bascombe of the shirt-front!

Wingfold found himself filled with contempt, but the next moment was not sure whether this Bascombe or one Wingfold were the more legitimate object of it. One thing was undeniable—his friends *had* put him into the priest’s office, and he had yielded to go that he might eat a piece of bread. He had no love for it except by fits, when the beauty of an anthem, or the composition of a collect, awoke in him a faint consent-

ing admiration or a weak responsive sympathy. Did he not, indeed, sometimes despise himself, and that pretty heartily, for earning his bread by work which any pious old woman could do better than he? True, he attended to his duties; not merely "did church," but his endeavor also that all things should be done decently and in order. All the same it remained a fact that if Barrister Bascombe were to stand up and assert in full congregation—as no doubt he was perfectly prepared to do—that there was no God anywhere in the universe, the Rev. Thomas Wingfold could not, on the church's part, prove to anybody that there was;—dared not, indeed, so certain would he be of discomfiture, advance a single argument on his side of the question. Was it even *his* side of the question? Could he say he believed there was a God? Or was not this all he knew—that there was a Church of England, which paid him for reading public prayers to a God in whom the congregation—and himself—were supposed by some to believe, by others, Bascombe, for instance, not?

These reflections were not pleasant, especially with Sunday so near. For what if there were hundreds, yes thousands of books, triumphantly settling every question which an over-seething and ill-instructed brain might by any chance suggest,—what could it boot?—how was a poor finite mortal, with much the ordinary faculty and capacity, and but a very small stock already stored, to set about reading, studying, understanding,

mastering, appropriating the contents of those thousands of volumes necessary to the arming of him who, without pretending himself the mighty champion to seek the dragon in his den, might yet hope not to let the loathly worm swallow him, armor and all, at one gulp in the highway? Add to this that—thought of all most dismayful!—he had himself to convince first, the worst dragon of all to kill, for bare honesty's sake, in his own field; while, all the time he was arming and fighting—like the waves of the flowing tide in a sou'-wester, Sunday came in upon Sunday, roaring on his flat, defenceless shore, Sunday behind Sunday rose towering in awful perspective, away to the verge of an infinite horizon—Sunday after Sunday of dishonesty and sham—yes, hypocrisy, far worse than any idolatry. To begin now, and in such circumstances, to study the evidences of Christianity, were about as reasonable as to send a man, whose children were crying for their dinner, off to China to make his fortune!

He laughed the idea to scorn, discovered that a grave-stone in a November midnight was a cold chair for study, rose, stretched himself disconsolately, almost despairingly, looked long at the persistent solidity of the dark church and the waving line of its age-slackened ridge, which, like a mountain range, shot up suddenly in the tower and ceased—then turning away left the houses of the dead crowded all about the house of the resurrection. At the farther gate he turned yet again; and gazed another moment on the tower. Towards the

sky it towered, and led his gaze upward. There still soared, yet rested, the same quiet night with its delicate heaps of transparent blue, its cool-glowing moon, its steely stars, and its something he did not understand. He went home a little quieter of heart, as if he had heard from afar something sweet and strange.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COUSINS.



GEORGE BASCOMBE was a peculiar development of the present century, almost of the present generation. In the last century, beyond a doubt, the description of such a man would have been incredible. I do not mean that he was the worse or the better for that. There are types both of good and of evil which to the past would have been incredible because unintelligible.

It is very hard sometimes for a tolerably honest man, as we have just seen in the case of Wingfold, to say what he believes, and it ought to be yet harder to say what another man does not believe; therefore I shall presume no further concerning Bascombe in this respect than to say that the thing he *seemed* most to believe was that he had a mission to destroy the beliefs of every body else. Whence he derived this mission he would not have thought a reasonable question—would have answered that if any man knew any truth unknown to another, understood any truth better, or could present it more clearly than another, the truth itself was his

commission of apostleship. And his stand was indubitably a firm one. Only there was the question—whether his presumed commission was verily truth or no. It must be allowed that a good deal turns upon that.

According to the judgment of some men who thought they knew him, Bascombe was as yet, I will not say incapable of distinguishing, but careless of the distinction between—not a fact and a law, perhaps, but a law and a truth. They said also that he inveighed against the beliefs of other people, without having ever seen more than a distorted shadow of those beliefs—some of them he was not capable of seeing, they said—only capable of denying. Now while he would have been perfectly justified, they said, in asserting that he saw no truth in the things he denied, was he justifiable in concluding that his not seeing a thing was a proof of its non-existence—any thing more, in fact, than a presumption against its existence? or in denouncing every man who said he believed this or that which Bascombe did not believe, as either a knave or a fool if not both in one? He would, they said, judge any body—a Shakespeare, a Bacon, a Milton, without a moment's hesitation or a quiver of reverence—judge men who beside him were as the living ocean to a rose-diamond. If he was armed in honesty, the rivets were of self-satisfaction. The suit, they allowed, was adamant, unpierceable.

That region of a man's nature which has to do with the unknown was in Bascombe shut off by a wall without chink or cranny; he was unaware of its existence. He had come out of the darkness, and was going

back into the darkness ; all that lay between, plain and clear, he had to do with—nothing more. He could not present to himself the idea of a man who found it impossible to live without some dealings with the supernal. To him a man's imagination was of no higher calling than to amuse him with its vagaries. He did not know, apparently, that Imagination had been the guide to all the physical discoveries which he worshipped, therefore could not reason that perhaps she might be able to carry a glimmering light even into the forest of the supersensible.

How far he was original in the views he propounded will, to those who understand the times of which I write, be plain enough. The lively reception of another man's doctrine, especially if it comes over water or across a few ages of semi-oblivion, and has to be gathered with occasional help from a dictionary, raises many a man, in his own esteem, to the same rank with its first propounder ; after which he will propound it so heartily himself as to forget the difference, and love it as his own child.

It may seem strange that the son of a clergyman should take such a part in the world's affairs, but one who observes will discover that, at college at least, the behavior of sons of clergymen resembles in general as little as that of any, and less than that of most, the behavior enjoined by the doctrines their fathers have to teach. The cause of this is matter for the consideration of those fathers. In Bascombe's case it must be mentioned, also, that instead of taking freedom from preju-

dice as a portion of the natural accomplishment of a gentleman, he prided himself upon it, and *therefore* would often go dead against the things presumed to be held by *the cloth*, long before he had begun to take his position as an iconoclast.

Lest I should, however, tire my reader with the delineation of a character not of the most interesting, I shall, for the present, only add that Bascombe had persuaded himself, and without much difficulty, that he was one of the prophets of a new order of things. At Cambridge he had been so regarded by a few who had lauded him as a mighty foe to humbug—and in some true measure he deserved the praise. Since then he had found a larger circle, and had even radiated of his light, such as it was, from the centres of London editorial offices. But all I have to do with now is the fact that he had grown desirous to add his cousin, Helen Lingard, to the number of those who believed in him, and over whom, therefore, he exercised a prophet's influence.

No doubt it added much to the attractiveness of the intellectual game that the hunt was on the home grounds of such a proprietress as Helen—a handsome, a gifted, and, above all, a lady-like young woman. To do Bascombe justice, the fact that she was an heiress also had very little weight in the matter. If he had ever had any thought of marrying her, that thought was not consciously present to him when first he became aware of his wish to convert her to his views of life. But although he was not in love with her, he admired

her, and believed he saw in her one that resembled himself.

As to Helen, although she was no more conscious of cause of self-dissatisfaction than her cousin, she was not therefore positively self-satisfied like him. For that her mind was not active enough.

If it seem, as it may, to some of my readers, difficult to believe that she should have come to her years without encountering any questions, giving life to any aspirations, or even forming any opinions that could rightly be called her own, I would remind them that she had always had good health, and that her intellectual faculties had been kept in full and healthy exercise, nor had once afforded the suspicion of a tendency towards artistic utterance in any direction. She was no mere dabbler in any thing: in music, for instance, she had studied thorough bass, and studied it well; yet her playing was such as I have already described it. She understood perspective, and could copy an etching in pen and ink to a hair's breadth, yet her drawing was hard and mechanical. She was pretty much at home in Euclid, and thoroughly enjoyed a geometric relation, but had never yet shown her English master the slightest pleasure in an analogy, or the smallest sympathy with any poetry higher than such as very properly delights schoolboys. Ten thousand things she knew without wondering at one of them. Any attempt to rouse her admiration she invariably received with quiet intelligence but no response. Yet her drawing-master was convinced there lay a large soul asleep somewhere below the calm gray

morning of that wide-awake yet reposeful intelligence. As far as she knew—only she had never thought any thing about it—she was in harmony with creation animate and inanimate, and for what might or might not be above creation, or at the back, or the heart, or the mere root of it, how could she think about a something the idea of which had never yet been presented to her by love or philosophy or even curiosity? As for any influence from the public offices of religion, a contented soul may glide through them all for a long life, unstruck to the last, buoyant and evasive as a bee amongst hailstones. And now her cousin, unsolicited, was about to assume, if she should permit him, the unspiritual direction of her being, so that she need never be troubled from the quarter of the unknown.

Mrs. Ramshorn's house had formerly been the manor-house, and, although it now stood in an old street, with only a few yards of ground between it and the road, it had a large and ancient garden behind it. A large garden of any sort is valuable, but an ancient garden is invaluable, and this one had retained a very antique loveliness. The quaint memorials of its history lived on into the new, changed, unsympathetic time, and stood there, aged, modest, and unabashed. Yet not one of the family had ever cared for it on the ground of its old-fashionedness; its preservation was owing merely to the fact that their gardener was blessed with a wholesome stupidity rendering him incapable of unlearning what his father, who had been gardener there before him, had had marvellous difficulty in teaching him.

We do not half appreciate the benefits to the race that spring from honest dulness. The *clever* people are the ruin of every thing.

Into this garden Bascombe walked the next morning, after breakfast, and Helen, who, next to the smell of a fir-wood fire, honestly liked the odor of a good cigar, spying him from her balcony, which was the roof of the veranda, where she was trimming the few remaining chrysanthemums that stood outside the window of her room, ran down the little wooden stair that led from it to the garden, and joined him. Nothing could just at present have been more to his mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GARDEN.

TAKE a cigar, Helen?" said George.

"No, thank you," answered Helen; "I like it diluted."

"I don't see why ladies should not have things strong as well as men."

"Not if they don't want them. You can't enjoy every thing—I mean, one can't have the strong and the delicate both at once. I don't believe a smoker can have the same pleasure in smelling a rose that I have."

"Isn't it a pity we never can compare sensations?"

"I don't think it matters much: every one would have to keep to his own after all."

"That's good, Helen! If ever man try to humbug you, he will find he has lost his stirrups. If only there were enough like you left in this miserable old hulk of a creation!"

It was an odd thing that when in the humor of finding fault, Bascombe would not unfrequently speak of the cosmos as a creation. He was himself unaware of the curious fact.

"You seem to have a standing quarrel with the creation, George! Yet one might think you had as little ground as most people to complain of your portion in it," said Helen.

"Well, you know, I don't complain for myself. I don't pretend to think I am specially ill used. But I am not every body. And then there's such a lot of born fools in it!"

"If they are born fools they can't help it."

"That may be; only it makes it none the pleasanter for other people; but, unfortunately, they are not the only or the worst sort of fools. For one born fool there are a thousand wilful ones. For one man that will honestly face an honest argument, there are ten thousand that will dishonestly shirk it. There's that curate-fellow now—Wingfold I think aunt called him—look at him now!"

"I can't see much in him to rouse indignation," said Helen. "He seems a very inoffensive man."

"I don't call it inoffensive when a man sells himself to the keeping up of a system that—"

Here Bascombe checked himself, remembering that a sudden attack upon what was at least, the more was the pity, a time-honored system might rouse a woman's prejudices; and as Helen had already listened to a large amount of undermining remark without perceiving the direction of his tunnels, he resolved, before venturing an open assault, to make sure that those prejudices stood, lightly borne, over an abyss of seething objection. He had had his experiences as the prophet-pio-

neer of glad tidings to the nations, and had before now, although such weakness he could not anticipate in Helen, seen one whom he considered a most promising pupil turn suddenly away in a storm of terror and disgust.

“What a folly is it now,” he instantly resumed, leaving the general and attacking a particular, “to think to make people good by promises and threats—promises of a heaven that would bore the dullest among them to death, and threats of a hell the very idea of which, if only half conceived, would be enough to paralyze every nerve of healthy action in the human system !”

“All nations have believed in a future state, either of reward or punishment,” objected Helen.

“Mere Brocken-spectres of their own approbation or disapprobation of themselves. And whither has it brought the race ?”

“What then would you substitute for it, George ?”

“Why substitute any thing? Ought not men to be good to one another because they are made up of ones and others? Do you or I need threats and promises to make us kind? And what right have we to judge others worse than ourselves? Mutual compassion,” he went on, blowing out a mouthful of smoke and then swelling his big chest with a huge lungsful of air, “might be sufficient to teach poor ephemerals kindness and consideration enough to last their time.”

“But how would you bring such reflections to bear?” asked Helen, pertinently.

“I would reason thus: You must consider that you

are but a part of the whole, and that whatever you do to hurt the whole, or injure any of its parts, will return upon you who form one of those parts."

"How would that influence the man whose favorite amusement is to beat his wife?"

"Not at all, I grant you. But that man is what he is from being born and bred under a false and brutal system. Having deluged his delicate brain with the poisonous fumes of adulterated liquor, and so roused all the terrors of a phantom-haunted imagination, he sees hostile powers above watching for his fall, and fiery ruin beneath gaping to receive him, and in pure despair acts like the madman the priests and the publicans have made him. Helen," continued Bascombe with solemnity, regarding her fixedly, "to deliver the race from the horrors of such falsehoods, which by no means operate only on the vulgar and brutal, for to how many of the most refined and delicate of human beings are not their lives rendered bitter by the evil suggestions of lying systems—I care not what they are called—philosophy, religion, society, I care not!—to deliver men, I say, from such ghouls of the human brain, were indeed to have lived! and in the consciousness of having spent his life in the slaying of such dragons, a man may well go from the nameless past into the nameless future rejoicing, careless even if his poor length of days be shortened by his labors to leave blessing behind him, and, full of courage even in the moment of final dissolution, cast her mockery back into the face of

mocking Life, and die her enemy and the friend of Death !”

George's language was a little confused. Perhaps he mingled his ideas a little for Helen's sake—or rather for obscurity's sake. Anyhow, the mournful touch in it was not his own, but taken from the poems of certain persons whose opinions resembled his, but floated on the surface of mighty and sad hearts. Tall, stately, comfortable Helen walked composedly by his side, softly shared his cigar, and thought what a splendid pleader he would make. Perhaps to her it sounded rather finer than it was, for its tone of unselfishness, the aroma of self-devotion that floated about it, pleased and attracted her. Was not here a youth in the prime of being and the dawn of success, handsome, and smoking the oldest of Havanas, who, so far from being enamoured of his own existence, was anxious and careful about that of less-favored mortals, for whose welfare indeed he was willing to sacrifice his life?—nothing less could be what he meant. And how fine he looked as he said it, with his head erect and his nostrils quivering like those of a horse ! For his honesty, that was self-evident !

Perhaps, had she been capable of looking into it, the self-evident honesty might have resolved itself into this—that he thoroughly believed in himself ; that he meant what he said ; and that he offered her nothing he did not prize and cleave to as his own.

To one who had read Darwin, and had chanced to see them as they walked in their steady, stately young life among the ancient cedars and clipped yews of the gar-

den, with the rags and tatters of the ruined summer hanging over and around them, they must have looked as fine an instance of natural selection as the world had to show. And now in truth for the first time, with any shadow of purpose, that is, did the thought of Helen as a wife occur to Bascombe. She listened so well, was so ready to take what he presented to her, was evidently so willing to become a pupil, that he began to say to himself that here was the very woman made—no, not made, that implied a maker—but for him, without the *made*; that is, if ever he should bring himself by marriage to limit the freedom to which man, the crown of the world, the blossom of nature, the cauliflower of the spine, was predestined or doomed, without will in himself or beyond himself, from an eternity of unthinking matter, ever producing what was better than itself, in the prolific darkness of non-intent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARK.



AT the bottom of Mrs. Ramshorn's garden was a deep sunk fence, which allowed a large meadow, a fragment of what had once been the manor-park, to belong, so far as the eye was concerned, to the garden. Nor was this all, for in the sunk fence was a door with a little tunnel, by which they could pass at once from the garden to the meadow. So, the day being wonderfully fine, Bascombe proposed to his cousin a walk in the park, the close-paling of which, with a small door in it, whereto Mrs. Ramshorn had the privilege of a key, was visible on the other side of the meadow. The two keys had but to be fetched from the house, and in a few minutes they were in the park. The turf was dry, the air was still, and although the woods were very silent, and looked mournfully bare, the grass drew nearer to the roots of the trees, and the sunshine filled them with streaks of gold, blending lovelily with the bright green of the moss that patched the older stems. Neither horses nor dogs say to themselves, I suppose, that the

sunshine makes them glad, yet both are happier, after the rules of equine and canine existence, on a bright day: neither Helen nor George could have understood a poem of Keats—not to say Wordsworth—(I do not mean they would not have fancied they did)—and yet the soul of nature that dwelt in these common shows did not altogether fail of influence upon them.

“I wonder what the birds do with themselves all the winter,” said Helen.

“Eat berries, and make the best of it,” answered George.

“I mean what becomes of them all. We see so few of them.”

“About as many as you see in summer. Because you hear them you fancy you see them.”

“But there is so little to hide them in winter.”

“Little is wanted to hide our dusky creatures.”

“They must have a hard time of it in frost and snow.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” returned George. “They enjoy life on the whole, I believe. It aint such a very bad sort of a world as some people would have it. Nature is cruel enough in some of her arrangements, it can’t be denied. She don’t scruple to carry out her plans. It is nothing to her that for the life of one great monster of a high-priest millions upon millions of submissive little fishes should be sacrificed; and then if any body come within the teeth of her machinery, don’t she mangle him finely—with her fevers and her agues and her convulsions and consumptions and what not? But still, barring her own necessities, and the consequences

of man's ignorance and foolhardiness, she is on the whole rather a good-natured old woman, and scatters a deal of tolerably fair enjoyment around her."

"One *would* think the birds must be happy in summer at least, to hear them sing," corroborated Helen.

"Yes, or to see them stripping a hawthorn bush in winter—always provided the cat or the hawk don't get a hold of them. With that nature does not trouble herself. Well, it's soon over—with all of us, and that's a comfort. If men would only get rid of their cats and hawks—such as the fancy, for instance, that all their suffering comes of the will of a malignant power! That is the kind of thing that makes the misery of the world!"

"I don't quite see—" began Helen.

"We were talking about the birds in winter," interrupted George, careful not to swell too suddenly any of the air-bags with which he would float Helen's belief. He knew wisely, and he knew how, to leave a hint to work while it was yet not half understood. By the time it was understood it would have grown a little familiar: the supposed pup when it turned out a cub would not be so terrible as if it had presented itself at once as leonate.

And so they wandered across the park, talking easily.

"They've got on a good way since I was here last," said George, as they came in sight of the new house the new earl was building. "But they don't seem much in a hurry with it either."

"Aunt says it is twenty years since the foundations were laid by the uncle of the present earl," said Helen;

“and then for some reason or other the thing was dropped.”

“Was there no house on the place before?”

“Oh! yes—not much of a house, though.”

“And they pulled it down, I suppose.”

“No; it stands there still.”

“Where?”

“Down in the hollow there—over those trees—about the worst place they could have built in. Surely you have seen it! Poldie and I used to run all over it.”

“No, I never saw it. Was it empty then?”

“Yes, or almost. I can remember some little attention paid to the garden, but none to the house. It is just falling slowly to pieces. Would you like to see it?”

“That I should,” returned Bascombe, who was always ready for any new impression on his sensorium, and away they went to look at the old house of Glaston, as it was called, after some greatly older and probably fortified place.

In the hollow all the water of the park gathered to a lake before finding its way to the river Lythe. This lake was at the bottom of the old garden, and the house at the top of it. The garden was walled on the two sides, and the walls ran right down to the lake. There were wonderful legends current among the children of Glaston concerning that lake, its depth, and the creatures in it; and one terrible story, which had been made a ballad of, about a lady drowned in a sack, whose ghost might still be seen when the moon was old, haunting the gardens and the house. Hence it came that none of

them went near it, except those few whose appetites for adventure now and then grew keen enough to prevent their imaginations from rousing more fear than supplied the proper relish of danger. The house itself even those few never dared to enter.

Not so had it been with Helen and Leopold. The latter had imagination enough to receive every thing offered, but Helen was the leader, and she had next to none. In her childhood she had heard the tales alluded to from her nurses, but she had been to school since, and had learned not to believe them; and certainly she was not one to be frightened at what she did not believe. So when Leopold came in the holidays, the place was one of their favored haunts, and they knew every cubic yard in the house.

"Here," said Helen to her cousin, as she opened a door in a little closet, and showed a dusky room which had no window but a small one high up in the wall of a back staircase, "here is one room into which I never could get Poldie without the greatest trouble. I gave it up at last, he always trembled so till he got out again. I will show you such a curious place at the other end of it."

She led the way to a closet similar to that by which they had entered, and directed Bascombe how to raise a trap which filled all the floor of it so that it did not show. Under the trap was a sort of well, big enough to hold three upon emergency.


"If only they could contrive to breathe," said George. "It looks ugly. If it had but a brain and a tongue, it could tell tales."

“Come,” said Helen. “I don’t know how it is, but I don’t like the look of it myself now. Let us get into the open air again.”

Ascending from the hollow, and passing through a deep belt of trees that surrounded it, they came again to the open park, and by and by reached the road that led from the lodge to the new building, upon which they presently encountered a strange couple.

CHAPTER X.

THE DWARFS.

HE moment they had passed them, George turned to his cousin with a countenance which bore moral indignation mingled with disgust. The healthy instincts of the elect of his race were offended by the sight of such physical failures, such mockeries of humanity as those.

The woman was little if any thing over four feet in height. She was crooked, had a high shoulder, and walked like a crab, one leg being shorter than the other. Her companion walked quite straight, with a certain appearance of dignity which he neither assumed nor could have avoided, and which gave his gait the air of a march. He was not an inch taller than the woman, had broad square shoulders, pigeon breast, and invisible neck. He was twice her age, and they seemed father and daughter. They heard his breathing, loud with asthma, as they went by.

"Poor things!" said Helen, with cold kindness.

"It is shameful!" said George, in a tone of righteous

anger. "Such creatures have no right to existence. The horrid manakin!"

"But, George!" said Helen, in expostulation, "the poor wretch can't help his deformity."

"No; but what right had he to marry and perpetuate such odious misery?"

"You are too hasty: the young woman is his niece."

"She ought to have been strangled the moment she was born—for the sake of humanity. Monsters ought not to live."

"Unfortunately they have all got mothers," said Helen, and something in her face made him fear he had gone too far.

"Don't mistake me, dear Helen," he said. "I would neither starve nor drown them after they had reached the faculty of resenting such treatment—of the justice of which," he added, smiling, "I am afraid it would be hard to convince them. But such people actually marry—I have known cases—and that ought to be provided against by suitable enactments and penalties."

"And so," rejoined Helen, "because they are unhappy already, you would heap unhappiness upon them?"

"Now, Helen, you must not be unfair to me any more than to your hunchbacks. It is the good of the many I seek, and surely that is better than the good of the few."

"What I object to is that it should be at the expense of the few—who are least able to bear it."

"The expense is trifling," said Bascombe. "Grant that it would be better for society that no such—or ra-

ther put it this way: grant that it would be well for each individual that goes to make up society that he were neither deformed, sickly, nor idiotic, and you mean the same that I do. A given space of territory under given conditions will always maintain a certain number of human beings; therefore such a law as I propose would not mean that the number drawing the breath of heaven should, to take the instance before us in illustration, be two less, but that a certain two of them should not be as he or she who passed now, creatures whose existence is a burden to them, but such as you and I, Helen, who may say without presumption that we are no disgrace to Nature's handicraft."

Helen was not sensitive. She neither blushed nor cast down her eyes. But his tenets, thus expounded, had nothing very repulsive in them so far as she saw, and she made no further objection to them.

As they walked up the garden again, through the many lingering signs of a more stately if less luxurious existence than that of their generation, she was calmly listening to a lecture on the ground of law, namely, the resignation of certain personal rights for the securing of other and more important ones: she understood, was mildly interested, and entirely satisfied.

They seated themselves in the summer-house—a little wooden room under the down-sloping boughs of a huge cedar, and pursued their conversation—or rather Bascombe pursued his monologue. A lively girl would in all probability have been bored to death by him, but Helen was not a lively girl, and was not bored at all. Ere they

went into the house she had heard, amongst a hundred other things of wisdom, his views concerning crime and punishment, with which, good and bad, true and false, I shall not trouble my reader except in regard to one point—that of the obligation to punish. Upon this point he was severe.

No person, he said, ought to allow any weakness of pity to prevent him from bringing to punishment the person who broke the laws upon which the well-being of the community depended. A man must remember that the good of the whole, and not the fate of the individual, was to be regarded.

It was altogether a notable sort of tête-à-tête between two such perfect specimens of the race, and as at length they entered the house, they professed to each other to have much enjoyed their walk.

Holding the opinions he did, Bascombe was in one thing inconsistent: he went to “divine service” on the Sunday with his aunt and cousin—not to humor Helen’s prejudices but those of Mrs. Ramshorn, who, belonging, as I have said, to the profession, had strong opinions as to the wickedness of not going to church. It was of no use, he said to himself, trying to upset her ideas, for to succeed would only be to make her miserable, and his design was to make the race happy. In the grand old Abbey, therefore, they heard together morning prayers, the Litany, and the Communion, all in one, after a weariful and lazy modern custom not yet extinct, and then a dull, sensible sermon, short, and tolerably well read, on the duty of forgiveness of injuries.

I dare say it did most of the people present a little good, undefinable as the faint influences of starlight, to sit under that "high embowed roof," within that vast artistic isolation, through whose mighty limiting the boundless is embodied, and we learn to feel the awful infinitude of the parent space out of which it is scooped. I dare also say that the tones of the mellow old organ spoke to something in many of the listeners that lay deeper far than the plummet of their self-knowledge had ever sounded. I think also that the prayers, the reading of which, in respect of intelligence, was admirable, were not only regarded as sacred utterances, but felt to be soothing influences by not a few of those who made not the slightest effort to follow them with their hearts; and I trust that on the whole their church-going tended rather to make them better than to harden them. But as to the main point, the stirring up of the children of the Highest to lay hold of the skirts of their Father's robe, the waking of the individual conscience to say *I will arise*, and the strengthening of the captive Will to break its bonds and stand free in the name of the eternal creating Freedom—for nothing of that was there any special provision. This belonged, in the nature of things, to the sermon, in which, if anywhere, the voice of the indwelling Spirit might surely be heard—out of his holy temple, if indeed that be the living soul of man, as St. Paul believed; but there was no sign that the preacher regarded his office as having any such end, although in his sermon lingered the rudimentary tokens

that such must have been the original intent of pulpit-utterance.

On the way home, Bascombe made some objections to the discourse, partly to show his aunt that he had been attending. He admitted that one might forgive and forget what did not come within the scope of the law, but, as he had said to Helen before, a man was bound, he said, to punish the wrong which through him affected the community.

“George,” said his aunt, “I differ from you there. Nobody ought to go to law to punish an injury. I would forgive ever so many before I would run the risk of the law. But as to *forgetting* an injury—some injuries at least—no, that I never would!—And I don’t believe, let the young man say what he will, that that is required of any one.”

Helen said nothing. She had no enemies to forgive, no wrongs worth remembering, and was not interested in the question. She thought it a very good sermon indeed.

When Bascombe left for London in the morning, he carried with him the lingering rustle of silk, the odor of lavender, and a certain blueness, not of the sky, which seemed to have something behind it, as never did the sky to him. He had never met woman so worthy of being his mate, either as regarded the perfection of her form or the hidden development of her brain—evident in her capacity for the reception of truth—as his own cousin, Helen Lingard. Might not the relationship account for the fact?

Helen thought nothing to correspond. She considered George a fine manly fellow. What bold and original ideas he had about every thing ! Her brother was a baby to him ! But then Leopold was such a love of a boy ! Such eyes and such a smile were not to be seen on this side the world. Helen liked her cousin, was attached to her aunt, but loved her brother Leopold, and loved nobody else. His Hindoo mother, high of caste, had given him her lustrous eyes and pearly smile, which, the first moment she saw him, won his sister's heart. He was then but eight years old, and she but eleven. Since then he had been brought up by his father's elder brother, who had the family estate in Yorkshire, but he had spent part of all his holidays with her, and they often wrote to each other. Of late indeed his letters had not been many, and a rumor had reached her that he was not doing quite satisfactorily at Cambridge, but she explained it away to the full contentment of her own heart, and went on building such castles as her poor aërolithic skill could command, with Leopold ever and always as the sharer of her self-expansion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CURATE AT HOME.



IF we could arrive at the feelings of a fish of the northern ocean around which the waters suddenly rose to tropical temperature, and swarmed with strange forms of life, uncouth and threatening, we should have a fair symbol of the mental condition in which Thomas Wingfold now found himself. The spiritual fluid in which his being floated had become all at once more potent, and he was in consequence uncomfortable. A certain intermittent stinging, as if from the flashes of some moral electricity, had begun to pass in various directions through the crude and chaotic mass he called himself, and he felt strangely restless. It never occurred to him—as how should it?—that he might have commenced undergoing the most marvellous of all changes,—one so marvellous, indeed, that for a man to foreknow its result or understand what he was passing through, would be more strange than that a caterpillar should recognize in the rainbow-winged butterfly hovering over the flower at whose leaf he was gnawing the perfected idea of his own potential

self—I mean the change of being born again. Nor were the symptoms such as would necessarily have suggested, even to a man experienced in the natural history of the infinite, that the process had commenced.

A restless night followed his reflections in the churchyard, and he did not wake at all comfortable. Not that ever he had been in the way of feeling comfortable. To him life had not been a land flowing with milk and honey. He had had few smiles, and not many of those grasps of the hand which let a man know another man is near him in the battle—for had it not been something of a battle, how could he have come to the age of six-and-twenty without being worse than he was? He would not have said, "All these have I kept from my youth up," but I can say that for several of them he had shown fight, although only One knew any thing of it. This morning, then, it was not merely that he did not feel comfortable: he was consciously uncomfortable. Things were getting too hot for him. That infidel fellow had poked several most awkward questions at him—yes, into him, and a good many more had in himself arisen to meet them. Usually he lay a little while before he came to himself; but this morning he came to himself at once, and not liking the interview, jumped out of bed as if he had hoped to leave himself there behind him.

He had always scorned lying, until one day, when still a boy at school, he suddenly found that he had told a lie, after which he hated it—yet now, if he was to believe—ah! whom? did not the positive fellow and his

own conscience say the same thing?—his profession, his very life was a lie! the very bread he ate grew on the rank fields of falsehood! No, no; it was absurd! it could not be! What had he done to find himself damned to such a depth? Yet the thing must be looked to. He bathed himself without remorse and never even shivered, though the water in his tub was bitterly cold, dressed with more haste than precision, hurried over his breakfast, neglected his newspaper, and took down a volume of early church history. But he could not read: the thing was hopeless—utterly. With the wolves of doubt and the jackals of shame howling at his heels, how could he start for a thousand-mile race! For God's sake give him a weapon to turn and face them with! Evidence! all of it that was to be had was but such as one man received, another man refused; and the popular acceptance was worth no more in respect of Christianity than of Mohammedanism, for how many had given the subject at all better consideration than himself? And there was Sunday with its wolves and jackals, and but a hedge between! He did not so much mind reading the prayers: he was not accountable for what was in them, although it was bad enough to stand up and read them. Happy thing he was not a dissenter, for then he would have had to pretend to pray from his own soul, which would have been too horrible! But there was the sermon! That at least was supposed to contain, or to be presented as containing, his own sentiments. Now what were his sentiments? For the life of him he could not tell. Had he *any* senti-

ments, any opinions, any beliefs, any unbeliefs? He had plenty of sermons, old, yellow, respectable sermons, not lithographed, neither composed by mind nor copied out by hand unknown, but in the neat writing of his old D.D. uncle, so legible that he never felt it necessary to read them over beforehand—just saw that he had the right one. A hundred and fifty-seven such sermons, the odd one for the year that began on a Sunday, of unquestionable orthodoxy, had his kind old uncle left him in his will, with the feeling probably that he was not only setting him up in sermons for life, but giving him a fair start as well in the race of which a stall in some high cathedral was the goal. For his own part he had never made a sermon, at least never one he had judged worth preaching to a congregation. He had rather a high idea, he thought, of preaching, and these sermons of his uncle he considered really excellent. Some of them, however, were altogether doctrinal, some very polemical: of such he must now beware. He would see of what kind was the next in order; he would read it and make sure it contained nothing he was not, in some degree at least, prepared to hold his face to and defend—if he could not absolutely swear he believed it purely true.

He did as resolved. The first he took up was in defence of the Athanasian creed! That would not do. He tried another. That was upon the Inspiration of the Scriptures. He glanced through it—found Moses on a level with St. Paul, and Jonah with St. John, and doubted greatly. There might be a sense—but—! No,

he would not meddle with it. He tried a third ; that was on the authority of the Church. It would not do. He had read each of all these sermons at least once to a congregation, with perfect composure and following indifference if not peace of mind, but now he could not come on one with which he was even in sympathy—not to say one of which he was certain that it was more true than false. At last he took up the odd one—that which could come into use but once in a week of years—and this was the sermon Bascombe heard and commented upon. Having read it over, and found nothing to compromise him with his conscience, which was like an irritable man trying to find his way in a windy wood by means of a broken lantern, he laid all the rest aside and felt a little relieved.

Wingfold had never neglected the private duty of a clergyman in regard of morning and evening devotions, but was in the habit of dressing and undressing his soul with the help of certain chosen contents of the prayer-book—a somewhat circuitous mode of communicating with him who was so near him,—that is, if St. Paul was right in saying that he lived and moved and was *in* Him ; but that Saturday he knelt by his bedside at noon, and began to pray or try to pray as he had never prayed or tried to pray before. The perplexed man cried out within the clergyman, and pressed for some acknowledgment from God of the being he had made.

But—was it strange to tell ? or if strange, was it not the most natural result nevertheless ?—almost the same

moment he began to pray in this truer fashion, the doubt rushed up in him like a torrent-spring from the fountains of the great deep—Was there—could there be a God at all? a real being who might actually hear his prayer? In this crowd of houses and shops and churches, amidst buying and selling and ploughing and praising and backbiting, this endless pursuit of ends and of means to ends, while yet even the wind that blew where it listed, blew under laws most fixed, and the courses of the stars were known to a hair's-breadth,—was there—could there be a silent invisible God working his own will in it all? Was there a driver to that chariot whose multitudinous horses seemed tearing away from the pole in all directions? and was he indeed, although invisible and inaudible, guiding that chariot, sure as the flight of a comet, straight to its goal? Or was there a soul to that machine whose myriad wheels went grinding on and on, grinding the stars into dust, matter into man, and man into nothingness? Was there—could there be a living heart to the universe that did positively hear him—poor, misplaced, dishonest, ignorant Thomas Wingfold, who had presumed to undertake a work he neither could perform nor had the courage to forsake, when out of the misery of the grimy little cellar of his consciousness he cried aloud for light and something to make a man of him? For now that Thomas had begun to doubt like an honest being, every ugly thing within him began to show itself to his awakened probity.

But honest and of good parentage as the doubts were,

no sooner had they shown themselves, than the wings of the ascending prayers fluttered feebly and failed. They sank slowly, fell, and lay as dead, while all the wretchedness of his position rushed back upon him with redoubled inroad. Here was a man who could not pray, and yet must go and read prayers and preach in the old attesting church, as if he too were of those who knew something of the secrets of the Almighty, and could bring out from his treasury, if not things new and surprising, then things old and precious! Ought he not to send round the bell-man to cry aloud that there would be no service? But what right had he to lay his troubles, the burden of his dishonesty, upon the shoulders of them who faithfully believed, and who looked to him to break to them their daily bread? And would not any attempt at a statement of the reasons he had for such an outrageous breach of all decorum be taken for a denial of those things concerning which he only desired most earnestly to know that they were true? For he had received from somewhere, he knew not how or whence, a genuine prejudice in favor of Christianity, while of those refractions and distorted reflexes of it, which go by its name and rightly disgust many, he had had few of the tenets thrust upon his acceptance.

Thus into the dark pool of his dull submissive life, the bold words of the unbeliever had fallen—a dead stone perhaps, but causing a thousand motions in the living water. Question crowded upon question, and doubt upon doubt, until he could bear it no longer, and start-

ing from the floor on which at last he had sunk prostrate, rushed in all but involuntary haste from the house, and scarcely knew where he was until, in a sort, he came to himself some little distance from the town, wandering hurriedly in field-paths.



CHAPTER XII.

AN INCIDENT.



It was a fair morning of All Hallows' summer. The trees were nearly despoiled, but the grass was green, and there was a memory of spring in the low sad sunshine: even the sunshine, the gladdest thing in creation, is sad sometimes. There was no wind, nothing to fight with, nothing to turn his mind from its own miserable perplexities. How endlessly his position as a clergyman, he thought, added to his miseries! Had he been a man unpledged, he could have taken his own time to think out the truths of his relations; as it was, he felt like a man in a coffin: out he must get, but had not room to make a single vigorous effort for freedom! It did not occur to him yet, that, unpressed from without, his honesty unstung, he might have taken more time to find out where he was than would have been either honest or healthful.

He came to a stile where his path joined another that ran both ways, and there seated himself, just as the same strange couple I have already described as met by

Miss Lingard and Mr. Bascombe approached and went by. After they had gone a good way, he caught sight of something lying in the path, and going to pick it up, found it was a small manuscript volume.

With the pleasurable instinct of service, he hastened after them. They heard him, and turning waited for his approach. He took off his hat, and presenting the book to the young woman, asked if she had dropped it. Possibly had they been ordinary people of the class to which they seemed to belong, he would not have uncovered to them, for he naturally shrunk from what might be looked upon as a display of courtesy, but their deformity rendered it imperative. Her face flushed so at sight of the book that, in order to spare her uneasiness, Wingfold could not help saying with a smile,

“Do not be alarmed: I have not read one word of it.”

She returned his smile with much sweetness, and said,

“I see I need not have been afraid.”

Her companion joined in thanks and apologies for having caused him so much trouble. Wingfold assured them it had been but a pleasure. It was far from a scrutinizing look with which he regarded them, but the interview left him with the feeling that their faces were refined and intelligent, and their speech was good. Again he lifted his rather shabby hat, the man responded with equal politeness in removing from a great gray head one rather better, and they turned from each other and went their ways, the sight of their malformation arousing in the curate no such questions as those with which it had agitated the tongue if not the heart of

George Bascombe, to widen the scope of his perplexities. He had heard the loud breathing of the man and seen the projecting eyes of the woman, but he never said to himself therefore that they were more hardly dealt with than he. Had such a thought occurred to him, he would have comforted the pain of his sympathy with the reflection that at least neither of them was a curate of the Church of England who knew positively nothing of the foundation upon which that church professed to stand.

How he got through the Sunday he never could have told. What times a man may get through—he knows not how! As soon as it was over, it was all a mist—from which gleamed or gloomed large the face of George Bascombe with its keen unbelieving eyes and scornful lips. All the time he was reading the prayers and lessons, all the time he was reading his uncle's sermon, he had not only been aware of those eyes, but aware also of what lay behind them—seeing and reading the reflex of himself in Bascombe's brain; but nothing more whatever could he recall.

Like finger-posts dim-seen, on a moorland journey, through the gathering fogs, Sunday after Sunday passed. I will not request my reader to accompany me across the confusions upon which was blowing that wind whose breath was causing a world to pass from chaos to cosmos. One who has ever gone through any experience of the kind himself will be able to imagine it; to one who has not, my descriptions would be of small service: he would but shrink from the represen-

tation as diseased and of no general interest. And he would be so far right, that the interest in such things must be most particular and individual or not at all.

The weeks passed and seemed to bring him no light, only increased earnestness in the search after it. Some assurance he must find soon, else he would resign his curacy, and look out for a situation as tutor.

Of course all this he ought to have gone through long ago! But how can a man go through any thing till his hour be come? Saul of Tarsus was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel when our Lord said to his apostles, "Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Wingfold had all this time been skirting the wall of the kingdom of heaven without even knowing that there was a wall there, not to say seeing a gate in it. The fault lay with those who had brought him up to the church as to the profession of medicine, or the bar, or the drapery business—as if it lay on one level of choice with other human callings. Nor were the honored of the church who had taught him free from blame, who never warned him to put his shoes from off his feet for the holiness of the ground. But how were they to warn him, if they had sowed and reaped and gathered into barns on that ground, and had never discovered therein treasure more holy than libraries, incomes, and the visits of royalty? As to visions of truth that make a man sigh with joy, and enlarge his heart with more than human tenderness—how many of those men had ever found such trea-

tures in the fields of the church? How many of them knew save by hearsay whether there be any Holy Ghost! How then were they to warn other men from the dangers of following in their footsteps and becoming such as they? Where, in a general ignorance and community of fault, shall we begin to blame? Wingfold had no time to accuse any one after the first gush of bitterness. He had to awake from the dead and cry for light, and was soon in the bitter agony of the cataleptic struggle between life and death.

He thought afterwards, when the time had passed, that surely in this period of darkness he had been visited and upheld by a power whose presence and even influence escaped his consciousness. He knew not how else he could have got through it. Also he remembered that strange helps had come to him; that the aspects of nature then wonderfully softened towards him, that then first he began to feel sympathy with her ways and shows, and to see in them all the working of a diffused humanity. He remembered how once a hawthorn-bud set him weeping; and how once, as he went miserable to church, a child looked up in his face and smiled, and how in the strength of that smile he had walked boldly to the lectern.

He never knew how long he had been in the strange birth-agony, in which the soul is as it were at once the mother that bears and the child that is born.

CHAPTER XIII.

A REPORT OF PROGRESS.



IN the mean time George Bascombe came and went ; every visit he showed clearer notions as to what he was for and what he was against ; every visit he found Helen more worthy and desirable than theretofore, and flattered himself he made progress in the conveyance of his opinions and judgments over into her mind. His various accomplishments went far in aid of his design. There was hardly any thing Helen could do that George could not do as well, and some he could do better, while there were many things George was at home in which were sealed to her. The satisfaction of teaching such a pupil he found great. When at length he began to make love to her, Helen found it rather agreeable than otherwise, and if there was a little more *making* in it than some women would have liked, Helen was not sufficiently in love with him to detect its presence. Still the pleasure of his preference was such that it opened her mind with a favorable prejudice towards

whatever in the shape of theory or doctrine he would have her receive ; and much that a more experienced mind would have rejected because of its evident results in practice, was by her accepted in the ignorance which confined her regard of his propositions to their intellectual relations, and prevented her from following them into their influences upon life, which would have reflected light upon their character. For life in its real sense was to her as yet little more definite and present than a dream that waits for the coming night. Hence when her cousin at length ventured to attack even those doctrines which all women who have received a Christian education would naturally be expected to revere the most, she was able to listen to him unshocked. But she little thought, or he either, that it was only in virtue of what Christian teaching she had had that she was capable of appreciating what was grand in his doctrine of living for posterity without a hope of good result to self beyond the consciousness that future generations of perishing men and women would be a little more comfortable, and perhaps a little less faulty therefrom. She did not reflect either that no one's theory concerning death is of much weight in his youth while life *feels* interminable, or that the gift of comfort during a life of so little value that the giver can part with it without regret is scarcely one to be looked upon as a mighty benefaction.

“ But truth is truth,” George would have replied.

What you profess to teach them might be a fact, but could never be a truth, I answer. And the very value

which you falsely put upon facts you have learned to attribute to them from the supposed existence of something at the root of all facts, namely *truths*, or eternal laws of being. Still, if you believe that men will be happier from learning your discovery that there is no God, preach it, and prosper in proportion to its truth. No; that from my pen would be a curse—no, preach it not, I say, until you have searched all spaces of space, up and down, in greatness and smallness—where I grant indeed, but you can not know, that you will not find him—and all regions of thought and feeling, all the unknown mental universe of possible discovery—preach it not until you have searched that also, I say, lest what you count a truth should prove to be no fact, and there should after all be somewhere, somehow, a very, living God, a Truth indeed, in whom is the universe. If you say, “But I am convinced there is none,” I answer—You may be convinced that there is no God such as this or that in whom men imagine they believe, but you can not be convinced there is no God.

Meantime George did not forget the present of this life in its future, continued particular about his cigars and his wine, ate his dinners with what some would call a good conscience and I would call a dull one, were I sure it was not a good digestion they really meant, and kept reading hard and to purpose.

Matters as between the two made no rapid advance. George went on loving Helen more than any other woman, and Helen went on liking George next best to her brother Leopold. Whether it came of prudence, of

which George possessed not a little, of coldness of temperament, or a pride that would first be sure of acceptance, I do not know, but he made no formal offer yet of handing himself over to Helen, and certainly Helen was in no haste to hear, more than he to utter, the irrevocable.

CHAPTER XIV.

JEREMY TAYLOR.



ONE Tuesday morning in the spring, the curate received by the local post the following letter dated from The Park-Gate :

“ Respected Sir : An obligation on my part which you have no doubt forgotten gives me courage to address you on a matter which seems to me of no small consequence concerning yourself. You do not know me, and the name at the end of my letter will have for you not a single association. The matter itself must be its own excuse.

“ I sat in a free seat at the Abbey church last Sunday morning. I had not listened long to the sermon ere I began to fancy I foresaw what was coming, and in a few minutes more I seemed to recognize it as one of Jeremy Taylor's. When I came home I found that the best portions of one of his sermons had, in the one you read, been wrought up with other material.

“ If, sir, I imagined you to be one of such as would willingly have that regarded as their own which was better than they could produce, and would with con-

tentment receive any resulting congratulations, I should feel that I was only doing you a wrong if I gave you a hint which might aid you in avoiding detection ; for the sooner the truth concerning such a one was known, and the judgment of society brought to bear upon it, the better for him, whether the result were justification or the contrary. But I have read that in your countenance and demeanor which convinces me that, however custom and the presence of worldly elements in the community to which you belong may have influenced your judgment, you require only to be set thinking of a matter, to follow your conscience with regard to whatever you may find involved in it.—I have the honor to be, respected sir, your obedient servant and well-wisher, Joseph Polwarth."

Wingfold sat staring at the letter, slightly stunned. The feeling which first grew recognizable in the chaos it had caused was vexation at having so committed himself ; the next, annoyance with his dead old uncle for having led him into such a scrape. There in the good doctor's own handwriting lay the sermon, looking no-wise different from the rest ! Had he forgotten his marks of quotation ? Or to that sermon did he always have a few words of extempore introduction ? For himself he was as ignorant of Jeremy Taylor as of Zo-roaster. It could not be that that was his uncle's mode of making his sermons ? Was it possible they could all be pieces of literary mosaic ? It was very annoying. If the fact came to be known, it would certainly be said that he had attempted to pass off Jeremy Taylor's for his

own—as if he would have the impudence to make the attempt, and with such a well-known writer! But what difference did it make whether the writer was well or ill known? None except as to the relative probabilities of escape and discovery! And should the accusation be brought against him, how was he to answer it? By burdening the reputation of his departed uncle with the odium of the fault? Was it worse in his uncle to use Jeremy Taylor than in himself to use his uncle? Or would his remonstrants accept the translocation of blame? Would the church-going or chapel-going inhabitants of Glaston remain mute when it came to be discovered that since his appointment he had not once preached a sermon of his own? How was it that knowing all about it in the background of his mind, he had never come to think of it before? It was true that, admirer of his uncle as he was, he had never imagined himself reaping any laurels from the credit of his sermons; it was equally true, however, that he had not told a single person of the hidden cistern whence he drew his large discourse. But what could it matter to any man, so long as a good sermon was preached, where it came from? He did not occupy the pulpit in virtue of his personality, but of his office, and it was not a place for the display of originality, but for dispensing the bread of life. From the stores of other people? Yes, certainly—if other people's bread was better, and no one the worse for his taking it. "For me, I have none," he said to himself. Why then should that letter have made him uncomfortable? What had he to be ashamed of?

Why should he object to being found out? What did he want to conceal? Did not every body know that very few clergymen really made their own sermons? Was it not absurd, this mute agreement that, although all men knew to the contrary, it must appear to be taken for granted that a man's sermons were of his own mental production? Still more absurd as well as cruel was the way in which they sacrificed to the known falsehood by the contempt they poured upon any fellow the moment they were able to say of productions which never could have been his, that they were by this man or that man, or bought at this shop or that shop in Great Queen Street or Booksellers' Row. After that he was an enduring object for the pointed finger of a mild scorn. It was nothing but the old Spartan game of steal as you will and enjoy as you can: you are nothing the worse; but woe to you if you are caught in the act! There *was* something contemptible about the whole thing. He was a greater humbug than he had believed himself, for upon this humbug which he now found himself despising he had himself been acting diligently! It dawned upon him that, while there was nothing wrong in preaching his uncle's sermons, there was evil in yielding to cast any veil, even the most transparent, over the fact that the sermons were not his own.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARK GATE.

HE had, however, one considerate, even friendly parishioner, it seemed, whom it became him at least to thank for his openness. He ceased to pace the room, sat down at his writing-table, and acknowledged Mr. Polwarth's letter, expressing his obligation for its contents, and saying that he would do himself the honor of calling upon him that afternoon, in the hope of being allowed to say for himself what little could be said, and of receiving counsel in regard to the difficulty wherein he found himself. He sent the note by his landlady's boy, and as soon as he had finished his lunch, which meant his dinner, for he could no longer afford to dull his soul in its best time for reading and thinking, he set out to find Park Gate, which he took for some row of dwellings in the suburbs.

Going in the direction pointed out, and finding he had left all the houses behind him, he stopped at the gate of Osterfield Park to make further inquiry. The door of the lodge was opened by one whom he took, for

the first half-second, to be a child, but recognized, the next, as the same young woman whose book he had picked up in the fields a few months before. He had never seen her since, but her deformity and her face together had made it easy to remember her.

"We have met before," he said, in answer to her courtesy and smile, "and you must now do me a small favor if you can."

"I shall be most happy, sir. Please come in," she answered.

"I am sorry I can not at this moment, as I have an engagement. Can you tell me where Mr. Polwarth of the Park Gate lives?"

The girl's smile of sweetness changed to one of amusement as she repeated, in a gentle voice through which ran a thread of suffering,

"Come in, sir, please. My uncle's name is Joseph Polwarth, and this is the gate to Osterfield Park. People know it as the Park Gate."

The house was not one of those trim modern park- lodges, all angles and peaks, which one sees everywhere nowadays, but a low cottage, with a very thick, wig-like thatch, into which rose two astonished eyebrows over the stare of two half-awake dormer-windows. On the front of it were young leaves and old hips enough to show that in summer it must be covered with roses.

Wingfold entered at once, and followed her through the kitchen upon which the door immediately opened, a bright place, with stone floor, and shining things on the walls, to a neat little parlor, cosey and rather dark, with

a small window to the garden behind, and a smell of last year's roses.

"My uncle will be here in a few minutes," she said, placing a chair for him. "I would have had a fire here, but my uncle always talks better amongst his books. He expected you, but my lord's steward sent for him up to the new house."

He took the chair she offered him, and sat down to wait. He had not much of the gift of making talk—a questionable accomplishment,—and he never could approach his so-called inferiors but as his equals, the fact being that in their presence he never felt any difference. Notwithstanding his ignorance of the lore of Christianity, Thomas Wingfold was, in regard to some things, gifted with what I am tempted to call a divine stupidity. Many of the distinctions and privileges after which men follow, and of the annoyances and slights over which they fume, were to the curate inappreciable: he did not and could not see them.

"So you are warders of the gate here, Miss Polwarth?" he said, assuming that to be her name, and rightly, when the young woman, who had for a moment left the room, returned.

"Yes," she answered, "we have kept it now for about eight years, sir. It is no hard task. But I fancy there will be a little more to do when the house is finished."

"It is a long way for you to go to church."

"It would be, sir; but I do not go."

"Your uncle does."

"Not very often, sir."

She left the door open and kept coming and going between the kitchen and the parlor, busy about house affairs. Wingfold sat and watched her as he had opportunity with growing interest.

She had the full-sized head that is so often set on a small body, and it looked yet larger from the quantity of rich brown hair upon it—hair which some ladies would have given their income to possess. Clearly too it gave pleasure to its owner, for it was becomingly as well as carefully and modestly dressed. Her face seemed to Wingfold more interesting every fresh peep he had of it, until at last he pronounced it to himself one of the sweetest he had ever seen. Its prevailing expression was of placidity, and something that was not contentment merely: I would term it satisfaction, were I sure that my reader would call up the very antipode of *self*-satisfaction. And yet there were lines of past and shadows of present suffering upon it. The only sign, however, that her poor crooked body was not at present totally forgotten was a slight shy undulation that now and then flickered along the lines of her sensitive mouth, seeming to indicate a shadowy dim-defined thought, or rather feeling, of apology, as if she would disarm prejudice by an expression of sorrow that she could not help the pain and annoyance her unsightliness must occasion. Every feature in her thin face was good, and seemed, individually almost, to speak of a loving spirit, yet he could see ground for suspecting that keen expressions of a quick temper could be no strangers upon those delicately-modelled forms. Her

hands and feet were both as to size and shape those of a mere child.

He was still studying her like a book which a boy reads by stealth, when with slow step her uncle entered the room.

Wingfold rose and held out his hand.

“You are welcome, sir,” said Polwarth modestly, with the strong grasp of a small firm hand. “Will you walk upstairs with me where we shall be undisturbed? My niece has, I hope, already made my apologies for not being at home to receive you.—Rachel, my child, will you get us a cup of tea, and by the time it is ready we shall have got through our business, I dare say.”

The face of Wingfold's host and new friend in expression a good deal resembled that of his niece, but bore traces of yet greater suffering—bodily, and it might be mental as well. It did not look quite old enough for the whiteness of the plentiful hair that crowned it, and yet there was that in it which might account for the whiteness.

His voice was a little dry and husky, streaked as it were with the asthma whose sounds made that big disproportioned chest seem like the cave of the east wind; but it had a tone of dignity and decision in it quite in harmony with both matter and style of his letter, and before Wingfold had followed him to the top of the steep narrow strait staircase all sense of incongruity in him had vanished from his mind.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTIC.

THE little man led the way into a tolerably large room, with down-sloping ceiling on both sides, lighted by a small window in the gable, near the fireplace, and a dormer window as well. The low walls, up to the slope, were filled with books; books lay on the table, on the bed, on chairs, and in corners everywhere.

“Aha!” said Wingfold, as he entered and cast his eyes around, “there is no room for surprise that you should have found me out so easily, Mr. Polwarth! Here you have a legion of detectives for such rascals.”

The little man turned, and for a moment looked at him with a doubtful and somewhat pained expression, as if he had not been prepared for such an entrance on a solemn question; but a moment's reading of the curate's honest face, which by this time had a good deal more print upon it than would have been found there six months ago, sufficed; the cloud melted into a smile, and he said cordially,

“It is very kind of you, sir, to take my presumption in such good part. Pray sit down, sir. You will find that chair a comfortable one.”

“Presumption!” echoed Wingfold. “The presumption was all on my part, and the kindness on yours. But you must first hear my explanation, such as it is. It makes the matter hardly a jot the better, only a man would not willingly look worse, or better either, than he is, and besides, we must understand each other if we would be friends. However unlikely it may seem to you, Mr. Polwarth, I really do share the common weakness of wanting to be taken exactly for what I am, neither more nor less.”

“It is a noble weakness, and far enough from common, I am sorry to think,” returned Polwarth.

The curate then told the gate-keeper of his uncle’s legacy, and his own ignorance of Jeremy Taylor.

“But,” he concluded, “since you set me thinking about it, my judgment has capsized itself, and it now seems to me worse to use my uncle’s sermons than to have used the bishop’s, which any one might discover to be what they are.”

“I see no harm in either,” said Polwarth, “provided only it be above board. I believe some clergymen think the only evil lies in detection. I doubt if they ever escape it, and believe the amount of successful deception in that kind to be very small indeed. Many in a congregation can tell, by a kind of instinct, whether a man be preaching his own sermons or not. But the worst evil appears to me to lie in the tacit understand-

ing that a sermon must *seem* to be a man's own, although all in the congregation know, and the would-be preacher knows that they know, that it is none of his."

"Then you mean, Mr. Polwarth, that I should solemnly acquaint my congregation next Sunday with the fact that the sermon I am about to read to them is one of many left me by my worthy uncle, Jonah Driftwood, D.D., who on his deathbed expressed the hope that I should support their teaching by my example, for, having gone over them some ten or fifteen times in the course of his incumbency, and bettered each every time until he could do no more for it, he did not think, save by my example, I could carry further the enforcement of the truths they contained: shall I tell them all that?"

Polwarth laughed, but with a certain seriousness in his merriment, which, however, took nothing from its genuineness, indeed seemed rather to add thereto.

"It would hardly be needful to enter so fully into particulars," he said. "It would be enough to let them know that you wished it understood between them and you that you did not profess to teach them any thing of yourself, but merely to bring to bear upon them the teaching of others. It would raise complaints and objections, doubtless; but for that you must be prepared if you would do any thing right."

Wingfold was silent, thoughtful, saying to himself, "How straight an honest bow can shoot!—But this involves something awful. To stand up in that pulpit and speak about myself! I who, even if I had any opinions, could never see reasons for presenting them

to other people! It's my office, is it—not me? Then I wish my Office would write his own sermons. He can read the prayers well enough!"

All his life, a little heave of pent-up humor would now and then shake his burden into a more comfortable position upon his bending shoulders. He gave a forlorn laugh.

"But," resumed the small man, "have you never preached a sermon of your own thinking—I don't mean of your own making—one that came out of the commentaries, which are, I am told, the mines whither some of our most noted preachers go to dig for their first inspirations—but one that came out of your own heart—your delight in something you had found out, or something you felt much?"

"No," answered Wingfold; "I have nothing, never had any thing worth giving to another; and it would seem to me very unreasonable to subject a helpless congregation to the blundering attempts of such a fellow to put into the forms of reasonable speech things he really knows nothing about."

"You must know about some things which it might do them good to be reminded of—even if they know them already," said Polwarth. "I can not imagine that a man who looks things in the face as you do the moment they confront you, has not lived at all, has never met with any thing in his history which has taught him something other people need to be taught. I profess myself a believer in preaching, and consider that in so far as the Church of England has ceased to be a preach-

ing church—and I don't call nine tenths of what goes by the name of it *preaching*—she has forgotten a mighty part of her high calling. Of course a man to whom no message has been personally given has no right to take the place of a prophet, and can not, save by more or less of simulation; but there is room for teachers as well as prophets, and the more need of teachers that the prophets are so few; and a man may right honestly be a clergyman who teaches the people, though he may possess none of the gifts of prophecy."

"I do not now see well how you are leading me," said Wingfold, considerably astonished at both the aptness and fluency with which a man in his host's position was able to express himself. "Pray, what do you mean by *prophecy*?"

"I mean what I take to be the sense in which St. Paul uses the word—I mean the highest kind of preaching. But I will come to the point practically: a man, I say, who does not feel in his soul that he has something to tell his people should straightway turn his energy to the providing of such food for them as he finds feeds himself. In other words, if he has nothing new in his own treasure, let him bring something old out of another man's. If his soul is unfed, he can hardly be expected to find food for other people, and has no business in any pulpit, but ought to betake himself to some other employment—whatever he may have been predestined to—I mean, made fit for."

"Then do you intend that a man *should* make up his sermons from the books he reads?"

“ Yes, if he can not do better. But then I would have him read—not with his sermon in his eye, but with his people in his heart. Men in business and professions have so little time for reading or thinking—and idle people have still less—that their means of grace, as the theologians say, are confined to discipline without nourishment, whence their religion, if they have any, is often from mere atrophy but a skeleton ; and the office of preaching is, first of all, to wake them up lest their sleep turn to death ; next, to make them hungry, and lastly to supply that hunger ; and for all these things the pastor has to take thought. If he feed not the flock of God, then is he an hireling, and no shepherd.”

At this moment Rachel entered with a small tea-tray : she could carry only little things, and a few at a time. She cast a glance of almost loving solicitude at the young man who now sat before her uncle with head bowed and self-abasement on his honest countenance, then a look of almost expostulation at her uncle, as if interceding for a culprit, and begging the master not to be too hard upon him. But the little man smiled—such a sweet smile of reassurance that her face returned at once to its prevailing expression of content. She cleared a place on the table, set down her tray, and went to bring cups and saucers.

CHAPTER XVII.

POLWARTH'S PLAN.



“THINK I understand you now,” said Wingfold, after the little pause occasioned by the young woman’s entrance: “You would have a man who can not be original, deal honestly in second-hand goods. Or perhaps, rather, he should say to the congregation, ‘This is not home-made bread I offer you, but something better. I got it from this or that baker’s shop. I have eaten of it myself, and it has agreed well with me and done me good. If you chew it well, I don’t doubt you also will find it good.’—Is that something like what you would have, Mr. Polwarth?”

“Precisely,” answered the gate-keeper. “But,” he added, after a moment’s delay, “I should be sorry if you stopped there.”

“Stopped there!” echoed Wingfold. “The question is whether I can begin there. You have no idea how ignorant I am—how little I have read!”

“I have some idea of both, I fancy. I must have

known considerably less than you at your age, for I was never at a university."

"But perhaps even then you had more of the knowledge which, they say, life only can give."

"I have it now, at all events. But of that every one has enough who lives his life. Those who gain no experience are those who shirk the king's highway for fear of encountering the Duty seated by the roadside."

"You ought to be a clergyman yourself, sir," said Wingfold, humbly. "How is it that such as I—"

Here he checked himself, knowing something of how it was.

"I hope I ought to be just what I am, neither more nor less," replied Polwarth. "As to being a clergyman, Moses had a better idea about such things, at least so far as concerns outsiders, than you seem to have, Mr. Wingfold. He would never have let a man who in size and shape is a mere mockery of the human stand up to minister to the congregation. But if you will let me help you, I shall be most grateful; for of late I have been oppressed with the thought that I serve no one but myself and my niece. I am in mortal fear of growing selfish under the weight of my privileges."

A fit of asthmatic coughing seized him, and grew in severity until he seemed struggling for his life. It was at the worst when his niece entered, but she showed no alarm, only concern, and did nothing but go up to him and lay her hand on his back between his shoulders till the fit was over. The instant the convulsion ceased, its pain dissolved in a smile.

Wingfold uttered some lame expressions of regret that he should suffer so much.

"It is really nothing to distress you, or me either, Mr. Wingfold," said the little man. "Shall we have a cup of tea, and then resume our talk?"

"The fact, I find, Mr. Polwarth," said the curate, giving the result of what had been passing through his mind, and too absorbed in that to reply to the invitation, "is that I must not, and indeed can not, give you half-confidences. I will tell you all that troubles me, for it is plain that you know something of which I am ignorant—something which, I have great hopes, will turn out to be the very thing I need to know. May I speak? Will you let me talk about myself?"

"I am entirely at your service, Mr. Wingfold," returned Polwarth; and seeing the curate did not touch his tea, placed his own cup again on the table.

The young woman got down like a child from the chair upon which she had perched herself at the table, and, with a kind look at Wingfold, was about to leave the room.

"No, no, Miss Polwarth!" said the curate, rising; "I shall not be able to go on if I feel that I have sent you away—and your tea untouched too! What a selfish and ungrateful fellow I am! I did not even observe that you had given me tea! But you would pardon me if you knew what I have been going through. If you don't mind staying, we can talk and drink our tea at the same time. I am very fond of tea when it is so good

as I see yours is. I only fear I may have to say some things that will shock you."

"I will stay till then," replied Rachel, with a smile, and climbed again upon her chair. "I am not much afraid. My uncle says things sometimes fit to make a Pharisee's hair stand on his head, but somehow they make my heart burn inside me.—May I stop, uncle? I should like so much!"

"Certainly, my child, if Mr. Wingfold will not feel your presence a restraint."

"Not in the least," said the curate.

Miss Polwarth helped them to bread and butter, and a brief silence followed.

"I was brought up to the church," said Wingfold at length, playing with his teaspoon, and looking down on the table. "It's an awful shame such a thing should have been, but I don't find out that any body in particular was to blame for it. Things are all wrong that way, in general, I doubt. I pass my examinations with decency, distinguish myself in nothing, go before the bishop; am admitted a deacon, after a year am ordained a priest, and after another year or two of false preaching and of parish work, suddenly find myself curate in charge of a grand old abbey church; but as to what the whole thing means in practical relation with myself as a human being, I am as ignorant as Simon Magus, without his excuse. Do not mistake me. I think I could stand an examination on the doctrines of the church as contained in the articles and prayer-book generally.

But for all they have done for me I might as well have never heard of them."

"Don't be quite sure of that, Mr. Wingfold. At least they have brought you to inquire if there be any thing in them."

"Mr. Polwarth," returned Wingfold abruptly, "I can not even prove there is a God!"

"But the Church of England exists for the sake of teaching Christianity, not proving that there is a God."

"What is Christianity, then?"

"God in Christ, and Christ in man."

"What is the use of that if there be no God?"

"None whatever."

"Mr. Polwarth, can you prove there is a God?"

"No."

"Then if you don't believe there is a God—I don't know what is to become of me," said the curate, in a tone of deep disappointment, and rose to go.

"Mr. Wingfold," said the little man, with a smile and a deep breath as of delight at the thought that was moving him, "I know him in my heart, and he is all in all to me. You did not ask whether I believed in him, but whether I could prove that there was a God. As well ask a fly which has not yet crawled about the world if he can prove that it is round!"

"Pardon me, and have patience with me," said Wingfold, resuming his seat. "I am a fool. But it is life or death to me."

"I would we were all such fools! But please ask me no more questions; or ask me as many as you will, but

expect no answers just yet. I want to know more of your mind first."

"Well, I will ask questions, but press for no answers. If you can not prove there is a God, do you know for certain that such a one as Jesus Christ ever lived? Can it be proved with positive certainty? I say nothing of what they call the doctrines of Christianity, or the authority of the church, or the sacraments, or any thing of that sort. Such questions are at present of no interest to me. And yet the fact that they do not interest me were enough to prove me in as false and despicable a position as ever man found himself occupying—as arrant a hypocrite and deceiver as any god-personating priest in the Delphic temple. I had rather a man despised than excused me, Mr. Polwarth, for I am at issue with myself, and love not my past."

"I shall do neither, Mr. Wingfold. Go on, if you please, sir. I am more deeply interested than I can tell you."

"Some few months ago, then, I met a young man who takes for granted the opposite of all that I had up to that time taken for granted, and which now I want to be able to prove. He spoke with contempt of my profession. I could not defend my profession, and of course had to despise myself. I began to think. I began to pray—if you will excuse me for mentioning it. My whole past life appeared like the figures that glide over the field of a *camera-obscura*—not an abiding fact in it all. A cloud gathered about me, and hangs about me still. I call, but no voice answers me out of the

darkness, and at times I am in despair. I would, for the love and peace of honesty, give up the profession, but I shrink from forsaking what I may yet possibly find—though I fear, I fear—to be as true as I wish to find it. Something, I know not what, holds me to it—some dim vague affection, possibly mere prejudice, aided by a love for music and the other sweet sounds of our prayers and responses. Nor would I willingly be supposed to deny what I dare not say—indeed know not how to say I believe, not knowing what it is. I should nevertheless have abandoned every thing months ago, had I not felt bound by my agreement to serve my rectory for a year. You are the only one of the congregation who has shown me any humanity, and I beg of you to be my friend and help me. What shall I do? After the avowal you have made, I may well ask you again, How am I to know that there is a God?”

“It were a more pertinent question, sir,” returned Polwarth,—“If there be a God, how am I to find him? And, as I hinted before, there is another question—one you have already put—more pertinent to your position as an English clergyman: Was there ever such a man as Jesus Christ?—Those, I think, were your own words: what do you mean by *such* a man?”

“Such as he is represented in the New Testament.”

“From that representation, what description would you give of him now? What is that *such*? What sort of person, supposing the story true, would you take this Jesus from that story to have been?”

Wingfold thought for a while.

"I am a worse humbug than I fancied," he said. "I can not tell what he was. My thoughts of him are so vague and indistinct that it would take me a long time to render myself able to answer your question."

"Perhaps longer still than you think, sir. It took me a very long time."



CHAPTER XVIII.

JOSEPH POLWARTH.



HALL I tell you," the gate-keeper went on, "something of my life, in return of the confidence you have honored me with?"

"Nothing could be more to my mind," answered Wingfold. "And I trust," he added, "it is no unworthy curiosity that makes me anxious to understand how you have come to know so much."

"Indeed it is not that I know much," said the little man. "On the contrary, I am the most ignorant person of my acquaintance. You would be astonished to discover what I don't know. But the thing is that I know what is worth knowing. Yet I get not a crumb more than my daily bread by it—I mean the bread by which the inner man lives. The man who gives himself to making money will seldom fail of becoming a rich man; and it would be hard if a man who gave himself to find wherewithal to still the deepest cravings of his best self should not be able to find that bread of life. I tried to make a little money by book-selling once: I failed—not to pay my debts, but to

make the money ; I could not go into it heartily, or give it thought enough, so it was all right I should not succeed ; but what I did and do make my object does not disappoint me.

“ My ancestors, as my name indicates, were of and in Cornwall, where they held large property. Forgive the seeming boast—it is but fact, and can reflect little enough on one like me. Scorn and pain mingled with mighty hope is a grand prescription for weaning the heart from the judgments and aspirations of this world. Later ancestors were, not many generations ago, the proprietors of this very property of Osterfield, which the uncle of the present Lord de Barré bought, and to which I, their descendant, am gate-keeper. What with gambling, drinking, and worse, they deserved to lose it. The results of their lawlessness are ours : we are what and where you see us. With the inherited poison, the Father gave the antidote. Rachel, my child, am I not right when I say that you thank God with me for having *thus* visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children ?”

“ I do, uncle ; you know I do—from the bottom of my heart,” replied Rachel in a low tender voice.

A great solemnity came upon the spirit of Wingfold, and for a moment he felt as if he sat wrapt in a cloud of sacred marvel, beyond and around which lay a gulf of music too perfect to touch his sense. But presently Polwarth resumed :

“ My father was in appearance a remarkably fine man, tall and stately. Of him I have little to say. If he did

not do well, my grandfather must be censured first. He had a sister very like Rachel here. Poor aunt Lottie! She was not so happy as my little one. My brothers were all fine men like himself, yet they all died young except my brother Robert. He too is dead now, thank God, and I trust he is in peace. I had almost begun to fear with himself that he would never die. And yet he was but fifty. He left me my Rachel with her twenty pounds a year. I have thirty of my own, and this cottage we have rent-free for attending to the gate. I shall tell you more about my brother some day. There are none of the family left now but myself and Rachel. God in his mercy is about to let it cease.

“I was sent to one of our smaller public schools—mainly, I believe, because I was an eyesore to my handsome father. There I made, I fancy, about as good a beginning as wretched health and the miseries of a sensitive nature, ever conscious of exposure, without mother or home to hide its feebleness and deformity, would permit. For then first I felt myself an outcast. I was the butt of all the coarser-minded of my school-fellows, and the kindness of some could but partially make up for it. On the other hand, I had no haunting and irritating sense of wrong, such as I believe not a few of my fellows in deformity feel—no burning indignation, or fierce impulse to retaliate on those who injured me or on the society that scorned me. The isolation that belonged to my condition wrought indeed to the intensifying of my individuality, but that again intensified my consciousness of need more than wrong, until the pas-

sion blossomed almost into assurance, and at length I sought even with agony the aid to which my wretchedness seemed to have a right. My longing was mainly for a refuge, for some corner into which I might creep, where I should be concealed, and so at rest. The sole triumph I coveted over my persecutors was to know that they could not find me—that I had a friend stronger than they. It is no wonder I should not remember when I began to pray, and hope that God heard me. I used to fancy to myself that I lay in his hand and peeped through his fingers at my foes. That was at night, for my deformity brought me one blessed comfort—that I had no bed-fellow. This I felt at first as both a sad deprivation and a painful rejection, but I learned to pray the sooner for the loneliness, and the heartier from the solitude which was as a chamber with closed door.

“I do not know what I might have taken to had I been made like other people, or what plans my mother cherished for me. But it soon became evident, as time passed and I grew no taller but more misshapen, that to bring me up to a profession would be but to render my deformity the more painful to myself. I spent, therefore, the first few years after I left school at home, keeping out of my father's way as much as possible, and cleaving fast to my mother. When she died, she left her little property between me and my brother. He had been brought up to my father's profession—that of an engineer. My father could not touch the principal of this money, but neither, while he lived, could we the interest. I hardly know how I lived for the next three or

four years—it must have been almost on charity, I think. My father was never at home, and but for the old woman who had been our only attendant all my life, I think very likely I should have starved. I spent my time mostly in reading—whatever I could lay my hands upon—and that not carelessly, but with such reflection as I was capable of. One thing I may mention, as showing how I was still carried in the same direction as before—that, without any natural turn for handicraft, I constructed for myself a secret place of carpenter's work in a corner of the garret, small indeed, but big enough for a couch on which I could lie, and a table as long as the couch. That was all the furniture. The walls were lined from top to bottom with books, mostly gathered from those lying about the house. Cunningly was the entrance to this nest contrived: I doubt if any one may have found it yet. If some imaginative dreamy boy has come upon it, what a find it must have been to him! I could envy him the pleasure. There I always went to say my prayers and read my Bible. But sometimes *The Arabian Nights*, or some other book of entrancing human invention, would come between, and make me neglect both, and then I would feel bad and forsaken; for as yet I knew little of the Heart to which I cried for shelter and warmth and defence.

“Somewhere in this time, at length, I began to feel dissatisfied, even displeased with myself. At first the feeling was vague, altogether undefined—a mere sense that I did not fit into things, that I was not what I ought to be, what was somehow and by the Authority

required of me. This went on, began to gather roots rather than send them out, grew towards something more definite. I began to be aware that, heavy affliction as it was to be made so different from my fellows, my outward deformity was but a picture of my inward condition. There nothing was right. Many things which in theory I condemned, and in others despised, were yet a part of myself, or, at best, part of an evil disease cleaving fast unto me. I found myself envious and revengeful and conceited. I discovered that I looked down on people whom I thought less clever than myself. Once I caught myself scorning a young fellow to whose disadvantage I knew nothing, except that God had made him handsome enough for a woman. All at once one day, with a sickening conviction it came upon me—with one of those sudden slackenings of the cord of self-consciousness, in which it doubles back quivering, and seems to break, while the man for an instant beholds his individuality apart from himself, is generally frightened at it, and always disgusted—a strange and indeed awful experience, which if it lasted longer than its allotted moment, might well drive a man mad who had no God to whom to offer back his individuality, in appeal against his double consciousness—it was in one of these cataleptic fits of the spirit, I say, that I first saw plainly what a contemptible little wretch I was, and writhed in the bright agony of conscious worthlessness.

“I now concluded that I had been nothing but a Pharisee and a hypocrite, praying with a bad heart, and that God saw me just as detestable as I saw myself, and de-

spised me and was angry with me. I read my Bible more diligently than ever for a time, found in it nothing but denunciation and wrath, and soon dropped it in despair. I had already ceased to pray.

“ One day a little boy mocked me. I flew into a rage, and, rendered by passion for the moment fleet and strong, pursued and caught him. Whatever may be a man’s condition of defence against evil, I have learned that he can not keep the good out of him. When the boy found himself in my clutches, he turned on me a look of such terror that it disarmed me at once, and, confounded and distressed to see a human being in such abject fear, a state which in my own experience I knew to be horrible, ashamed also that it should be before such a one as myself, I would have let him go instantly, but that I could not without having comforted him. But not a word of mine could get into his ears, and I saw at length that he was so *pre*-possessed, that every tone of kindness I uttered, sounded to him a threat: nothing would do but let him go. The moment he found himself free, he fled headlong into the pond, got out again, ran home, and told, with perfect truthfulness I believe, though absolute inaccuracy, that I threw him in. After this I tried to govern my temper, but found that the more I tried, the more even that I succeeded outwardly, that is, succeeded in suppressing the signs and deeds of wrath, the less could I keep down the wrath in my soul. I then tried never to think about myself at all, and read and read—not the Bible—more and more in order to forget myself. But ever through all my reading and

thinking I was aware of the lack of harmony at the heart of me : I was not that which it was well to be ; I was not at peace ; I lacked ; I was distorted ; I was sick. Such were my feelings, not my reflections. All that time is as the memory of an unlovely dream—a dream of confusion and pain.

“ One evening, in the twilight, I lay alone in my little den, not thinking, but with mind surrendered and passive to what might come into it. It was very hot—indeed sultry. My little skylight was open, but not a breath of air entered. What preceded I do not know, but the face of the terrified boy rose before me, or in me rather, and all at once I found myself, eagerly, painfully, at length almost in an agony, persuading him that I would not hurt him, but meant well and friendly towards him. Again I had just let him go in despair, when the sweetest, gentlest, most refreshing little waft of air came in at the window and just went *being*, hardly moving, over my forehead. Its greeting was more delicate than even my mother's kiss, and yet it cooled my whole body. Now whatever, or whencesoever the link, if any be supposed needful to account for the fact, it kept below in the secret places of the springs, for I saw it not ; but the next thought of which I was aware was, What if I misunderstood God the same way the boy had misunderstood me ! and the next thing was to take my New Testament from the shelf on which I had laid it aside.

“ Another evening of that same summer, I said to myself that I would begin at the beginning and read it through. I had no definite idea in the resolve ; it

seemed a good thing to do, and I would do it. It would serve towards keeping up my connection in a way with *things above*. I began, but did not that night get through the first chapter of St. Matthew. Conscientiously I read every word of the genealogy, but when I came to the twenty-third verse and read, 'Thou shalt call his name JESUS; *for he shall save his people from their sins*,' I fell on my knees. No system of theology had come between me and a common-sense reading of the book. I did not for a moment imagine that to be saved from my sins meant to be saved from the punishment of them. That would have been no glad tidings to me. My sinfulness was ever before me, and often my sins too, and I loved them not, yet could not free myself of them. They were in me and of me, and how was I to part myself from that which came to me with my consciousness, which asserted itself in me as one with my consciousness? I could not get behind myself so as to reach its root. But here was news of one who came from behind that root itself to deliver me from that in me which made being a bad thing! Ah! Mr. Wingfold, what if, after all the discoveries made, and all the theories set up and pulled down, amid all the commonplaces men call common sense, notwithstanding all the overpowering and excluding self-assertion of things that are seen, ever crying, 'Here we are, and save us there is nothing: the Unseen is the Unreal!'—what if, I say, notwithstanding all this, it should yet be that the strongest weapon a man can wield is prayer to one who made him! What

if the man who lifts up his heart to the unknown God even, be entering, amid the mockery of men who worship what they call natural law and science, into the region whence issues every law, and where the very material of science is born !

“ To tell you all that followed, if I could recall and narrate it in order, would take hours. Suffice it that from that moment I was a student, a disciple. Soon to me also came then the two questions : *How do I know that there is a God at all?* and *How am I to know that such a man as Jesus ever lived?* I could answer neither. But in the mean time I was reading the story—was drawn to the Man there presented, and was trying to understand his being, and character, and principles of life and action. And, to sum all in a word, many months had not passed ere I had forgotten to seek an answer to either question : they were in fact questions no longer : I had seen the man Jesus Christ, and in him had known the Father of him and of me. My dear sir, no conviction can be got, or if it could be got, would be of any sufficing value, through that dealer in second-hand goods, the intellect. If by it we could prove there is a God, it would be of small avail indeed : we must see him and know him, to know that he was not a demon. But I know no other way of knowing that there is a God but that which reveals *what* he is—the only idea that could be God—shows him in his own self-proving existence—and that way is Jesus Christ as he revealed himself on earth, and as he is revealed afresh to every heart that seeks to know the truth concerning him.”

A pause followed—a solemn one—and then again Polwath spoke.

“Either the whole frame of existence,” he said, “is a wretched, miserable unfitness, a chaos with dreams of a world, a chaos in which the higher is forever subject to the lower, or it is an embodied idea growing towards perfection in him who is the one perfect creative Idea, the Father of lights, who suffers himself that he may bring his many sons into the glory which is his own glory.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

BUT," said Wingfold, "—only pray do not think I am opposing you ; I am in the straits you have left so far behind—how am I to know that I should not merely have wrought myself up to the believing of that which I should like to be true?"

"Leave that question, my dear sir, until you know what that really is which you want to believe. I do not imagine that you have yet more than the merest glimmer of the nature of that concerning which you, for the very reason that you know not what it is, most rationally doubt. Is a man to refuse to withdraw his curtains lest some flash in his own eyes should deceive him with a vision of morning while yet it is night? The truth to the soul is as light to the eyes: you may be deceived, and mistake something else for light, but you can never fail to know the light when it really comes."

"What then would you have of me? What am I to do?" said Wingfold, who, having found his master, was

docile as a child, but had not laid firm enough hold upon what he had last said.

"I repeat," said Polwarth, "that the community whose servant you are was not founded to promulgate or defend the doctrine of the existence of a Deity, but to perpetuate the assertion of a man that he was the son and only revealer of the Father of men, a fact, if it be a fact, which precludes the question of the existence of a God, because it includes the answer to it. Your business, therefore, even as one who finds himself in your unfortunate position as a clergyman, is to make yourself acquainted with that man: he will be to you nobody save in revealing, through knowledge of his inmost heart, the Father to you. Take then your New Testament as if you had never seen it before, and read—to find out. If in him you fail to meet God, then go to your consciousness of the race, your metaphysics, your Plato, your Spinoza. Till then, this point remains: there was a man who said he knew him, and that if you would give heed to him you too should know him. The record left of him is indeed scanty, yet enough to disclose what manner of man he was—his principles, his ways of looking at things, his thoughts of his Father and his brethren and the relations between them, of man's business in life, his destiny, and his hopes."

"I see plainly," answered the curate, "that what you say I must do. But how, while on duty as a clergyman, I *do not know*. How am I, with the sense of the unreality of my position ever growing upon me, and my utter inability to supply the wants of the congregation save

from my uncle's store of dry provender, which it takes me a great part of my time so to modify as, in using it, to avoid direct lying—with all this pressing upon me, and making me restless and irritable and self-contemptuous, how *am* I to set myself to such solemn work, wherein a man must surely be clear-eyed and single-hearted if he would succeed in his quest? I must resign my curacy."

Mr. Polwarth thought a little.

"It would be well, I think, to retain it for a time at least while you search," he said. "If you do not within a month see prospect of finding Him, then resign. In any case, your continuance in the service must depend on your knowledge of the Lord of it, and his will concerning you."

"May not a prejudice in favor of my profession blind and deceive me?"

"I think it will rather make *you* doubtful of conclusions that support it."

"I will go and try," said Wingfold, rising; "but I fear I am not the man to make discoveries in such high regions."

"You are the man to find what fits your own need if the thing be there," said Polwarth. "But to ease your mind for the task: I know pretty well some of our best English writers of the more practical and poetic sort in theology—the two qualities go together—and if you will do me the favor to come again to-morrow, I shall be able, I trust, to provide you wherewithal to feed your flock, free of that duplicity which, be

it as common as the surplice, and as fully connived at as laughed at by that flock, is yet duplicity. There is no law that sermons shall be the preacher's own, but there is an eternal law against all manner of humbug. Pardon the word."

"I will not attempt to thank you," said Wingfold, "but I will do as you tell me. You are the first real friend I have ever had—except my brother, who is dead."

"Perhaps you have had more friends than you are aware of. You owe something to the man, for instance, who, with his outspoken antagonism, roused you first to a sense of what was lacking to you."

"I hope I shall be grateful to God for it some day," returned Wingfold. "I can not say that I feel much obligation to Mr. Bascombe. And yet, when I think of it—perhaps—I don't know—what ought a man to be more grateful for than honesty?"

After a word of arrangement for next day the curate took his leave, assuredly with a stronger feeling of simple genuine respect than he had ever yet felt for man. Rachel bade him good night with her fine eyes filled with tears, which suited their expression, for they always seemed to be looking through sorrow to something beyond it.

"If this be a type of the way the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children," said the curate to himself, "there must be more in the progression of history than political economy can explain. It would drive us to believe in an economy wherein rather the well-being of the whole was the result of individual treatment, and

not the well-being of the individual the result of the management of the whole?"

I will not count the milestones along the road on which Wingfold now began to journey. Some of the stages, however, will appear in the course of my story. When he came to any stiff bit of collar-work, the little man generally appeared with an extra horse. Every day during the rest of that week he saw his new friends.

THE END OF THE MATTER.



CHAPTER XX.

A STRANGE SERMON.



ON the Sunday the curate walked across the churchyard to morning prayer very much as if the bells instead of ringing the people to church had been tolling for his execution. But if he was going to be hanged, he would at least die like a gentleman, confessing his sin. Only he would it were bedtime and all well. He trembled so when he stood up to read that he could not tell whether or not he was speaking in a voice audible to the congregation. But as his hour drew near, the courage to meet it drew near also, and when at length he ascended the pulpit stairs, he was able to cast a glance across the sea of heads to learn whether the little man was in the poor seats. But he looked for the big head in vain.

When he read his text, it was to a congregation as listless and indifferent as it was wont to be. He had not gone far, however, before that change of mental condition was visible on the faces before him, which a troop of horses would have shown by a general forward swivelling of the ears. Wonderful to tell, they were

actually listening. But in truth it was no wonder, for seldom in any, and assuredly never in that church, had there been heard such an exordium to a sermon.

His text was, "*Confessing your faults one to another.*" Having read it with a return of the former trembling, and paused, his brain suddenly seemed for a moment to reel under a wave of extinction that struck it, then to float away upon it, and then to dissolve in it, as it interpenetrated its whole mass, annihilating thought and utterance together. But with a mighty effort of the will, in which he seemed to come as near as man could come to the willing of his own existence, he recovered himself and went on. To do justice to this effort, my reader must remember that he was a shy man, and that he knew his congregation but too well for an unsympathetic one—whether from their fault or his own mattered little for the nonce. It had been hard enough to make up his mind to the attempt when alone in his study, or rather, to tell the truth, in his chamber, but to carry out his resolve in the face of so many faces, and in spite of a cowardly brain, was an effort and a victory indeed. Yet after all, upon second thoughts, I see that the true resolve was the victory, sweeping shyness and every other opposing weakness along with it. But it wanted courage of yet another sort to make of his resolve a fact, and his courage, in that kind as well, had never yet been put to the test or trained by trial. He had not been a fighting boy at school; he had never had the chance of riding to hounds; he had never been in a shipwreck or a house on fire; had never been

waked from a sound sleep with a demand for his watch and money ; yet one who had passed creditably through all these trials might still have carried a doubting conscience to his grave rather than face what Wingfold now confronted.

From the manuscript before him he read thus :

“ ‘Confess your faults one to another.’—This command of the apostle, my hearers, ought to justify me in doing what I fear some of you may consider almost as a breach of morals—talking of myself in the pulpit. But in the pulpit has a wrong been done, and in the pulpit shall it be confessed. From Sunday to Sunday, standing on this spot, I have read to you, without word of explanation, as if they formed the message I had sought and found for you, the thoughts and words of another. Doubtless they were better than any I could have given you from my own mind or experience, and the act had been a righteous one, had I told you the truth concerning them. But that truth I did not tell you. At last, through words of honest expostulation, the voice of a friend whose wounds are faithful, I have been aroused to a knowledge of the wrong I have been doing. Therefore I now confess it. I am sorry. I will do so no more.

“ But, brethren, I have only a little garden on a bare hillside, and it hath never yet borne me any fruit fit to offer for your acceptance ; also, my heart is troubled about many things, and God hath humbled me. I beg of you ; therefore, to bear with me for a little while, if, doing what is but lawful and expedient both, I break

through the bonds of custom in order to provide you with food convenient for you. Should I fail in this, I shall make room for a better man. But for your bread of this day, I go gleaning openly in other men's fields—fields into which I could not have found my way, in time at least for your necessities, and where I could not have gathered such full ears of wheat, barley, and oats but for the more than assistance of the same friend who warned me of the wrong I was doing both you and myself. Right ancient fields are some of them, where yet the ears lie thick for the gleaner. To continue my metaphor: I will lay each handful before you with the name of the field where I gathered it; and together they will serve to show what some of the wisest and best shepherds of the English flock have believed concerning the duty of confessing our faults."

He then proceeded to read the extracts which Mr. Polwarth had helped him to find—and arrange, not chronologically, but after an idea of growth. Each handful, as he called it, he prefaced with one or two words concerning him in whose field he had gleaned it.

His voice steadied and strengthened as he read. Renewed contact with the minds of those vanished teachers gave him a delight which infused itself into the uttered words, and made them also joyful; and if the curate preached to no one else in the congregation, certainly he preached to himself, and before it was done had entered into a thorough enjoyment of the sermon.

A few of the congregation were disappointed because they had looked for a justification and enforcement of

the confessional, thinking the change in the curate could only have come from that portion of the ecclesiastical heavens towards which they themselves turned their faces. A few others were scandalized at such an innovation on the part of a young man who was only a curate. Many, however, declared that it was the most interesting sermon they had ever heard in their lives—which perhaps was not saying much.

Mrs. Ramshorn made a class by herself. Not having yet learned to like Wingfold, and being herself one of the craft, with a knowledge of not a few of the secrets of the clerical—prison-house shall I call it, or green-room?—she was indignant with the presumptuous young man who degraded the pulpit to a level with the dock. Who cared for him? What was it to a congregation of respectable people, many of them belonging to the first county-families, that he, a mere curate, should have committed what he fancied a crime against them! He should have waited until it had been laid to his charge. Couldn't he repent of his sins, whatever they were, without making a boast of them in the pulpit, and exposing them to the eyes of a whole congregation? She had known people make a stock-in-trade of their sins! What was it to them whether the washy stuff he gave them by way of sermons was his own foolishness or some other noodle's! Nobody would have troubled himself to inquire into his honesty if he had but held his foolish tongue. Better men than he had preached other people's sermons, and never thought it worth mentioning. And what worse were the people? The only

harm lay in letting them know it ; that brought the profession into disgrace, and prevented the good the sermon would otherwise have done, besides giving the enemies of the truth a handle against the church. And then such a thing to call a sermon ! As well take a string of blown eggs to market ! Thus she expatiated, half the way home, before either of her companions found an opportunity of saying a word.

“ I am sorry to differ from you, aunt,” said Helen. “ I thought the sermon a very interesting one. He read beautifully.”

“ For my part,” said Bascombe, who was now a regular visitor from Saturdays to Mondays, “ I used to think the fellow a muff, but, by Jove ! I’ve changed my mind. If ever there was a plucky thing to do, that was one, and there ain’t many men, let me tell you, aunt, who would have the pluck for it.—It’s my belief, Helen,” he went on, turning to her and speaking in a lower tone, “ I’ve had the honor of doing that fellow some good. I gave him my mind about honesty pretty plainly the first time I saw him. And who can tell what may come next when a fellow once starts in the right way ! We shall have him with us before long. I must look out for something for him, for of course he’ll be in a devil of a fix without his profession.”

“ I’m so glad you think with me, George !” said Helen. “ There was always something I was inclined to like about Mr. Wingfold. Indeed I should have liked him quite if he had not been so painfully modest.”

“ Notwithstanding his sheepishness, though,” return-

ed Bascombe, "there was a sort of quiet self-satisfaction about him, and the way he always said *Don't you think?* as if he were Socrates taking advantage of Mr. Green and softly guiding him into a trap, which I confess made me set him down as conceited; but, as I say, I begin to change my mind. By Jove! he must have worked pretty hard too in the dust-bins to get together all those bits of gay rag and resplendent crockery!"

"You heard him say he had help."

"No, I don't remember that."

"It came just after that pretty simile about gleaning in old fields."

"I remember the simile, for I thought it a very absurd one—as if fields would lie gleanable for generations!"

"To be sure—now you point it out!" acquiesced Helen.

"The grain would have sprouted and borne harvests a hundred. If a man *will* use figures, he should be careful to give them legs. I wonder who he got to help him—not the rector, I suppose?"

"The rector!" echoed Mrs. Ramshorn, who had been listening to the young people's remarks with a smile of quiet scorn on her lip, thinking what an advantage was experience, even if it could not make up for the loss of youth and beauty—"the last man in the world to lend himself to such a miserable makeshift and pretence! Without brains enough even to fancy himself able to write a sermon of his own, he flies to the dead,—to their very coffin as it were—and I will not say *steals* from

them, for he does it openly, not having even shame enough to conceal his shame !”


“I like a man to hold his face to what he does, or thinks either,” said Bascombe.

“Ah ! George,” returned his aunt, in tones of wisdom, “by the time you have had my experience you will have learned a little prudence.”

Meantime, so far as his aunt was concerned, George did use prudence, for in her presence he did not hold his face to what he thought. He said to himself it would do her no good. She was so prejudiced ! and it might interfere with his visits. She, for her part, never had the slightest doubt of his orthodoxy : was he not the son of a clergyman and canon—a grandson of the church herself ?

CHAPTER XXI.

A THUNDERBOLT.

OMETIMES a thunderbolt, as men call it, will shoot from a clear sky ; and sometimes, into the midst of a peaceful family, or a yet quieter individuality, without warning of gathered storm above or slightest tremble of earthquake beneath, will fall a terrible fact, and from the moment every thing is changed. That family or that life is no more what it was—probably never more can be what it was. Better it ought to be, worse it may be—which, depends upon itself. But its spiritual weather is altered. The air is thick with cloud, and can not weep itself clear. There may come a gorgeous sunset, though.

It were a truism for one who believes in God to say that such catastrophes, so rending, so frightful, never come but where they are needed. The Power of Life is not content that they who live in and by him should live poorly and contemptibly. If the presence of low thoughts which he repudiates, yet makes a man miserable, how must it be with him if they who live and move

and have their being-in him are mean and repulsive, or alienated through self-sufficiency and slowness of heart?

I can not report much progress in Helen during the months of winter and spring. But if one wakes at last, wakes at all, who shall dare cast the stone at him—that he ought to have awaked sooner? What man who is awake will dare to say that he roused himself the first moment it became possible to him? The main and plain and worst, perhaps only condemnation, is—that when people do wake they do not get up. At the same time, however, I can hardly doubt that Helen was keeping the law of a progress slow as the growth of an iron-tree.

Nothing had ever yet troubled her. She had never been in love, could hardly be said to be in love now. She went regularly to church, and I believe said her prayers night and morning—yet felt no indignation at the doctrines and theories propounded by George Bascombe. She regarded them as “George’s ideas,” and never cared to ask whether they were true or not, at the same time that they were becoming to her by degrees as like truth as falsehood can ever be. For to the untruthful mind the false *can* seem the true. Meantime she was not even capable of giving him the credit he deserved, in that, holding the opinions he held, he yet advocated a life spent for the community—without, as I presume, deriving much inspiration thereto from what he himself would represent as the ground of all conscientious action, the consideration, namely, of its reaction upon its originator. Still farther was it from entering the field of her vision that possibly some of the good

which distinguished George's unbelief from that of his brother ephemera of the last century was owing to the deeper working of that leaven which he denounced as the poisonous root whence sprung all the evil diseases that gnawed at the heart of society.

One night she sat late, making her aunt a cap. The one sign of originality in her was the character of her millinery, of which kind of creation she was fond, displaying therein both invention as to form and perception as to effect, combined with lightness and deftness of execution. She was desirous of completing it before the next morning, which was that of her aunt's birthday. They had had friends to dine with them who had stayed rather late, and it was now getting towards one o'clock. But Helen was not easily tired, and was not given to abandoning what she had undertaken; so she sat working away, and thinking, not of George Bascombe, but of one whom she loved better—far better—her brother Leopold. But she was thinking of him not quite so comfortably as usual. Certain anxieties she had ground for concerning him had grown stronger, for the time since she heard from him had grown very long.

All at once her work ceased, her hands were arrested, her posture grew rigid: she was listening. *Had* she heard a noise outside her window?

My reader may remember that it opened on a balcony, which was at the same time the roof of a veranda that went along the back of the house, and had a stair at one end to the garden.

Helen was not easily frightened, and had stopped her

needle only that she might listen the better. She heard nothing. Of course it was but a fancy! Her hands went on again with their work.—But that was really very like a tap at the window! And now her heart did beat a little faster, if not with fear, then with something very like it, in which perhaps some foreboding was mingled. But she was not a woman to lay down her arms upon the inroad of a vague terror. She quietly rose, and, saying to herself it must be one of the pigeons that haunted the balcony, laid her work on the table, and went to the window. As she drew one of the curtains a little aside to peep, the tap was plainly and hurriedly though softly repeated, and at once she swept it back. There was the dim shadow of a man's head upon the blind, cast there by an old withered moon low in the west! Perhaps it was something in the shape of the shadow that made her pull up the blind so hurriedly, and yet with something of the awe with which we take "the face-cloth from the face." Yes, there was a face!—frightful, not as that of a corpse, but as that of a spectre from whose soul the scars of his mortal end have never passed away. Helen did not scream—her throat seemed to close and her heart to cease. But her eyes continued movelessly fixed on the face even after she knew it was the face of her brother, and the eyes of the face kept staring back into hers through the glass with such a look of concentrated eagerness that they seemed no more organs of vision but caves of hunger, nor was there a movement of the lips towards speech. The two gazed at each other for a moment of rigid silence. The

glass that separated them might have been the veil that divides those who call themselves the living from those whom they call the dead.

It was but a moment by the clock, though to the after consciousness it seemed space immeasurable. She came to herself, and slowly, noiselessly, though with tremulous hand, undid the sash and opened the window. Nothing divided them now, yet he stood as before, staring into her face. Presently his lips began to move, but no words came from them.

In Helen horror had already roused the instinct of secrecy. She put out her two hands, took his face between them, and said in a hurried whisper, calling him by the pet name she had given him when a child,

“Come in, Poldie, and tell me all about it.”

Her voice seemed to wake him. Slowly, with the movements of one half paralyzed, he shoved and dragged himself over the window-sill, dropped himself on the floor inside, and lay there, looking up in her face like a hunted animal, that hoped he had found a refuge, but doubted. Seeing him so exhausted, she turned from him to go and get some brandy, but a low cry of agony drew her back. His head was raised from the floor and his hands were stretched out, while his face entreated her, as plainly as if he had spoken, not to leave him. She knelt and would have kissed him, but he turned his face from her with an expression which seemed of disgust.

“Poldie,” she said, “*I must* go and get you something. Don’t be afraid. They are all sound asleep.”

The grasp with which he had clutched her dress relaxed, and his hand fell by his side. She rose at once and went, creeping through the slumberous house, light and noiseless as a shadow, but with a heart that seemed not her own lying hard in her bosom. As she went she had to struggle to rouse and compose herself, for she could not think. An age seemed to have passed since she heard the clock strike twelve. One thing was clear—her brother had been doing something wrong, and dreading discovery had fled to her. The moment this conviction made itself plain to her she drew herself up with the great deep breath of a vow, as strong as it was silent and undefined, that he should not have come to her in vain. Silent-footed as a beast of prey, silent-handed as a thief, lithe in her movements, her eye flashing with the new-kindled instinct of motherhood to the orphan of her father, it was as if her soul had been suddenly raised to a white heat, which rendered her body elastic and responsive.

CHAPTER XXII.

LEOPOLD.



HE re-entered her room with the gait of a new-born goddess treading the air. Her brother was yet prostrate where she had left him. He raised himself on his elbow, seized with trembling hand the glass she offered him, swallowed the brandy at a gulp, and sank again on the floor. The next instant he sprang to his feet, cast a terrified look at the window, bounded to the door and locked it, then ran to his sister, threw his arms about her, and clung to her like a trembling child. But ever his eyes kept turning to the window.

Though now twenty years of age, and at his full height, he was hardly so tall as Helen. Swarthy of complexion, his hair dark as the night, his eyes large and lustrous, with what Milton calls 'quel sereno fulgor d' amabil nero,' his frame nervous and slender, he looked compact and small beside her.

She did her utmost to quiet him, unconsciously using the same words and tones with which she had soothed his passions when he was a child. All at once he raised his

head and drew himself back from her arms with a look of horror, then put his hand over his eyes as if her face had been a mirror and he had seen himself in it.

“What is that on your wristband, Leopold?” she asked. “Have you hurt yourself?”

The youth cast an indescribable look on his hand, but it was not that which turned Helen so deadly sick: with her question had come to her the ghastly suspicion that the blood she saw was not his, and she felt guilty of an unpardonable, wicked wrong against him. But she would never, never believe it! A sister suspect her only brother of such a crime! Yet her arms dropped and let him go. She stepped back a pace, and of themselves, as it were, her eyes went wandering and questioning all over him, and saw that his clothes were torn and soiled—stained—who could tell with what?

He stood for a moment still and submissive to their search, with face downcast. Then, suddenly flashing his eyes on her, he said, in a voice that seemed to force its way through earth that choked it back,

“Helen, I am a murderer, and they are after me. They will be here before daylight.”

He dropped on his knees, and clasped hers.

“O sister! sister! save me, save me!” he cried in a voice of agony.

Helen stood without response, for to stand took all her strength. How long she fought that horrible sickness, knowing that, if she moved an inch, turned from it a moment, yielded a hair's-breadth, it would throw

her senseless on the floor and the noise of her fall would rouse the house, she never could even conjecture. All was dark before her, as if her gaze had been on the under side of her coffin-lid, and her brain sank and swayed and swung in the coils of the white snake that was sucking at her heart. At length the darkness thinned; it grew a gray mist; the face of her boy-brother glimmered up through it, like that of Dives in hell-fire to his guardian-angel as he hung lax-winged and faint in the ascending smoke. The mist thinned, and at length she caught a glimmer of his pleading, despairing, self-horrified eyes: all the mother in her nature rushed to the aid of her struggling will; her heart gave a great heave; the blood ascended to her white brain, and flushed it with rosy life; her body was once more reconciled and obedient; her hands went forth, took his head between them, and pressed it against her.

"Poldie, dear," she said, "be calm and reasonable, and I will do all I can for you. Here, take this.—And now, answer me one question."

"You won't give me up, Helen?"

"No. I will not."

"Swear it, Helen."

"Ah! my poor Poldie, is it come to this between you and me?"

"Swear it, Helen."

"So help me God, I will not!" murmured Helen, looking up.

Leopold rose, and again stood quiet before her, but

again with down-bent head, like a prisoner about to receive sentence.

"Do you mean what you said a moment since—that the police are in search of you?" asked Helen with forced calmness.

"They must be. They must have been after me for days—I don't know how many. They will be here soon. I can't think how I have escaped them so long. Hark! Isn't that a noise at the street-door? No, no! There's a shadow on the curtains! No! it's my eyes; they've cheated me a thousand times. Helen! I did not try to hide her; they must have found her long ago."

"My God!" cried Helen, but checked the scream that sought to follow the cry.

"There was an old shaft near," he went on hurriedly: "If I had thrown her down that they would never have found her, for there must be choke-damp at the bottom of it enough to kill a thousand of them. But I could not bear the thought of sending the lovely thing down there—even to save my life."

He was growing wild again, but the horror had again laid hold upon Helen, and she stood speechless, staring at him.

"Hide me, hide me, Helen!" he pleaded. "Perhaps you think I am mad. Would to God I were! Sometimes I think I must be. But this I tell you is no madman's fancy. If you take it for that, you will bring me to the gallows.—So, if you will see me hanged—"

He sat down and folded his arms.

"Hush, Poldie, hush!" cried Helen, in an agonized

whisper. "I am only thinking what I can best do. I can not hide you here, for if my aunt knew, she would betray you by her terrors; and if she did not know, and those men came, she would help them to search every corner of the house. Otherwise there might be a chance."

Again she was silent for a few moments, then, seeming suddenly to have made up her mind, went softly to the door.

"Don't leave me!" cried Leopold.

"Hush! I must. I know now what to do. Be quiet here until I come back."

Slowly, cautiously, she unlocked it, and left the room. In three or four minutes she returned, carrying a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine. To her dismay Leopold had vanished. Presently he came creeping out from under the bed, looking so abject that Helen could not help a pang of shame. But the next moment the love of the sister, the tender compassion of the woman, returned in full tide and swallowed up the unsightly thing. The more abject he was the more was he to be pitied and ministered to.

"Here, Poldie," she said, "you carry the bread, and I will take the wine. You must eat something, or you will be ill."


As she spoke, she locked the door again. Then she put a dark shawl over her head, and fastened it under her chin. Her white face shone out from it like the moon from a dark cloud.

"Follow me, Poldie," she said, and putting out the

candles, went to the window. He obeyed without question, carrying the loaf she had put into his hands. The window-sash rested on a little door ; she opened it, and stepped on the balcony. As soon as her brother had followed her, she closed it again, drew down the sash, and led the way to the garden, and so, by the door in the sunk fence, out upon the meadows.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REFUGE.

HE night was very dusky, but Helen knew perfectly the way she was going. A strange excitement possessed her, and lifted her above all personal fear. The instant she found herself in the open air, her faculties seemed to come preternaturally awake, and her judgment to grow quite cool. She congratulated herself that there had been no rain, and the ground would not betray their steps. There was enough of light in the sky to see the trees against it, and partly by their outlines she guided herself to the door in the park-paling, whence she went as straight as she could for the deserted house. Remembering well her brother's old dislike to the place, she said nothing of their destination, but when he suddenly stopped, she knew that it had dawned upon him. For one moment he hung back, but a stronger and more definite fear lay behind, and he went on.

Emerging from the trees on the edge of the hollow, they looked down, but it was too dark to see the mass

of the house, or the slightest gleam from the surface of the lake. All was silent as a deserted churchyard, and they went down the slope as if it had been the descent to Hades. Arrived at the wall of the garden, they followed its buttressed length until they came to a tall narrow gate of wrought iron, almost consumed with rust, and standing half open. By this they passed into the desolate garden, whose misery in the daytime was like that of a ruined soul, but now hidden in the night's black mantle. Through the straggling bushes with their arms they forced and with their feet they felt their way to the front door of the house, the steps to which, from the effects of various floods, were all out of the level in different directions. The door was unlocked as usual, needing only a strong push to open it, and they entered. How awfully still it seemed!—much stiller than the open air, though that had seemed noiseless. There was not a rat or a black beetle in the place. They groped their way through the hall and up the wide staircase, which gave not one creak in answer to their needlessly careful footsteps: not a soul was within a mile of them. Helen had taken Leopold by the hand, and she now led him straight to the closet whence the hidden room opened. He made no resistance, for the covering wings of the darkness had protection in them. How desolate must the soul be that welcomes such protection! But when, knowing that thence no ray could reach the outside, she struck a light, and the spot where he had so often shuddered was laid bare to his soul, he gave a cry and turned and would have rushed away.

Helen caught him ; he yielded, and allowed her to lead him into the room. There she lighted a candle, and as it came gradually alive, it shed a pale yellow light around, and revealed a bare chamber with a bedstead and the remains of a moth-eaten mattress in a corner. Leopold threw himself upon it, uttering a sound that more resembled a choked scream than a groan. Helen sat down beside him, took his head on her lap, and sought to soothe him with such tender loving words as had never before found birth in her heart, not to say crossed her lips. She took from her pocket a dainty morsel, and tried to make him eat, but in vain. Then she poured him out a cupful of wine. He drank it eagerly, and asked for more, which she would not give him. But instead of comforting him, it seemed only to rouse him to fresh horror. He clung to his sister as a child clings to the nurse who has just been telling him an evil tale, and ever his face would keep turning from her to the door with a look of frightful anticipation. She consoled him with all her ingenuity, assured him that for the present he was perfectly safe, and, thinking it would encourage a sense of concealment, reminded him of the trap in the floor of the closet and the little chamber underneath. But at that he started up with glaring eyes.

“Helen ! I remember now,” he cried. “I knew it at the time ! Don’t you know I never could endure the place ? I foresaw, as plainly as I see you now, that one day I should be crouching here for safety with a hideous

crime on my conscience. I told you so, Helen, at the time. Oh! how could you bring me here?"

He threw himself down again, and hid his face on her lap.

With a fresh inroad of dismay Helen thought he must be going mad, for this was the merest trick of his imagination. Certainly he had always dreaded the place, but never a word of that sort had he said to her. Yet there was a shadow of possible comfort in the thought—for what if the whole thing should prove an hallucination! But whether real or not, she must have his story.

"Come, dearest Poldie, darling brother!" she said, "you have not yet told me what it is. What is the terrible thing you have done? I dare say it's nothing so very bad after all!"

"There's the light coming!" he said in a dull hollow voice, "—the morning! always the morning coming again!"

"No, no, dear Poldie!" she returned. "There is no window here—at least it only looks on the back stair, high above heads; and the morning is a long way off."

"How far?" he asked, staring in her eyes; "twenty years? That was just when I was born! Oh! that I could enter a second time into my mother's womb, and never be born! Why are we sent into this cursed world? I would God had never made it. What was the good? Couldn't he have let well alone?"

He was silent. She must get him to sleep.

It was as if a second soul had been given her to supplement the first, and enable her to meet what would

otherwise have been the exorbitant demands now made upon her. With an effort of the will such as she could never before have even imagined, she controlled the anguish of her own spirit, and, softly stroking the head of the poor lad, which had again sought her lap, compelled herself to sing him for lullaby a song of which in his childhood he had been very fond, and with which, in all the importance of imagined motherhood, she had often sung him to sleep. And the old influence was potent yet. In a few minutes the fingers which clutched her hand relaxed, and she knew by his breathing that he slept. She sat still as a stone, not daring to move, hardly daring breath enough to keep her alive, lest she should rouse him from his few blessed moments of self-nothingness, during which the tide of the all-infolding ocean of peace was free to flow into the fire-torn cave of his bosom. She sat motionless thus, until it seemed as if for very weariness she must drop in a heap on the floor, but that the aches and pains which went through her in all directions held her body together like ties and rivets. She had never before known what weariness was, and now she knew it for all her life. But like an irritant, her worn body clung about her soul and dulled it to its own grief, thus helping it to a pitiful kind of repose. How long she sat thus she could not tell—she had no means of knowing, but it seemed hours on hours, and yet, though the nights were now short, the darkness had not begun to thin. But when she thought how little access the light had to that room, she began to grow uneasy lest she should be missed from her own,

or seen on her way back to it. At length some involuntary movement woke him. He started to his feet with a look of wild gladness. But there was scarcely time to recognize it before it vanished.

"My God, it is true, then!" he shrieked. "O Helen! I dreamed that I was innocent—that I had but dreamed I had done it. Tell me that I'm dreaming now. Tell me! tell me! Tell me that I am no murderer!"

As he spoke he seized her shoulder with a fierce grasp, and shook her as if trying to wake her from the silence of a lethargy.

"I hope you are innocent, my darling. But in any case I will do all I can to protect you," said Helen. "Only I shall never be able unless you control yourself sufficiently to let me go home."

"No, Helen!" he cried; "you must not leave me. If you do, I shall go mad. *She* will come instead."

Helen shuddered inwardly, but kept her outward composure.

"If I stay with you, just think, dearest, what will happen," she said. "I shall be missed, and all the country will be raised to look for me. They will think I have been—." She checked herself.

"And so you might be—so might any one," he cried, "so long as I am loose—like the Rajah's man-eating horse. O God! it has come to this!" And he hid his face in his hands.

"And then you see, my Poldie," Helen went on as calmly as she could, "they would come here and find us; and I don't know what might come next."

“Yes, yes, Helen! Go, go directly. Leave me this instant,” he said hurriedly, and took her by the shoulders, as if he would push her from the room, but went on talking. “It must be, I know; but when the light comes I shall go mad. Would to God I might, for the day is worse than the darkness; then I see my own black against the light. Now go, Helen. But you *will* come back to me as soon as ever you can? How shall I know when to begin to look for you? What o’clock is it? My watch has never been—since—. Ugh! the light will be here soon. Helen, I know not what hell is.—Ah! yes.” As he spoke he had been feeling in one of his pockets. “I will not be taken alive.—Can you whistle, Helen?”

“Yes, Poldie,” answered Helen, trembling. “Don’t you remember teaching me?”

“Yes, yes. Then, when you come near the house, whistle, and go on whistling, for if I hear a step without any whistling I shall kill myself.”

“What have you got there?” she asked, in renewed terror, noticing that he kept his hand in the breast-pocket of his coat.

“Only the knife,” he answered calmly.

“Give it to me,” she said, calmly too.

He laughed, and the laugh was more terrible than any cry.

“No; I’m not so green as that,” he said. “My knife is my only friend! Who is to take care of me when you are away? Ha! ha!”

She saw that the comfort of the knife must not be

denied him. Nor did she fear any visit that might drive him to its use—except indeed the police *were* to come upon him—and then what better could he do? she thought.

“Well, well, I will not plague you,” she said. “Lie down and I will cover you with my shawl, and you can fancy it my arms round you. I will come to you as soon as ever I can.”

He obeyed. She spread her shawl over him and kissed him.

“Thank you, Helen,” he said quietly.

“Pray to God to deliver you, dear,” she said.

“He can do that only by killing me,” he returned. “I will pray for that. But do you go, Helen. I will try to bear my misery for your sake.”

He followed her from the room with eyes out of which looked the very demon of silent despair.

I will not further attempt to set forth his feelings. The incredible, the impossible, had become a fact—and *he was the man*. He who knows the relief of waking from a dream of crime to the jubilation of recovered innocence, to the sunlight that blots out the thing as untrue, may by help of that conceive the misery of a delicate nature suddenly filled with the clear assurance of horrible guilt. Such a misery no waking but one that annihilated the past could ever console. Yes, there is yet an awaking—if a man might but attain unto it—an awaking into a region whose very fields are full of the harmony sovereign to console, not merely for having

suffered—that needs little consoling—but for having inflicted the deepest wrong.

The moment Helen was out of sight Leopold drew a small silver box from an inner pocket, eyed it with the eager look of a hungry animal, took from it a portion of a certain something, put it in his mouth, closed his eyes, and lay still.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HELEN WITH A SECRET.



WHEN Helen came out into the corridor she saw that the day was breaking. A dim, dreary light filled the dismal house, but the candle had prevented her from perceiving the little of it that could enter that room withdrawn. A pang of fear shot to her soul, and like a belated spectre or a roused somnambulist she fled across the park. It was all so like a horrible dream, from which she must wake in bed! yet she knew there was no such hope for her. Her darling lay in that frightful house, and if any one should see her it might be death to him. But it was yet very early, and two hours would pass before any of the workmen would be on their way to the new house. Yet, like a murderer shaken out of the earth by the light, she fled. When she was safe in her own room, ere she could get into bed, she once more turned deadly sick, and next knew by the agonies of coming to herself that she had fainted.

A troubled, weary, excited sleep followed. She woke with many a start, as if she had sinned in sleeping, and

instantly, for very weariness, dozed off again. How kind is weariness sometimes! It is like the Father's hand laid a little heavy on the heart to make it still. But her dreams were full of torture, and even when she had no definite dream, she was haunted by the vague presence of blood. It was considerably past her usual time for rising when at length she heard her maid in the room. She got up wearily, but, beyond the heaviest of hearts and a general sense of misery, nothing ailed her; nor even did her head ache.

But she had lived an age since she woke last; and the wonder was, not that she felt so different, but that she should be aware of being the same person as before notwithstanding all that had passed. Her business now was to keep herself from thinking until breakfast should be over. She must hold the "ebony box" of last night close shut even from her own eyes, lest the demons of which it was full should rush out and darken the world about her. She hurried to her bath for strength; the friendly water would rouse her to the present, make the past recede like a dream, and give her courage to face the future. Her very body seemed defiled by the knowledge that was within it. Alas! how must poor Leopold feel then! But she must not think.

All the time she was dressing her thoughts kept hovering round the awful thing like moths around a foul flame, from which she could not drive them away. Ever and again she said to herself that she must not, yet ever and again she found herself peeping through the chinks of the thought-chamber at the terrible thing

inside—the form of which she could not see—saw only the color—red—red, mingled with ghastly whiteness. In all the world her best-loved, her brother, the child of her grand father, was the only one who knew how that thing came there.

But while Helen's being was in such tumult that she could never more be the cool, indifferent, self-contented person she had hitherto been, her old habits and forms of existence were now of endless help to the retaining of her composure and the covering of her secret. A dim gleam of gladness woke in her at the sight of the unfinished cap, than which she could not have a better excuse for her lateness, and when she showed it to her aunt with the wish of many happy returns of the day, no second glance from Mrs. Ramshorn added to her uneasiness.

But oh! how terribly the time crept in its going! for she dared not approach the deserted house while the daylight kept watching it like a dog. And what if Leopold should have destroyed himself in the madness of his despair before she could go to him! She had not a friend to help her. George Bascombe?—she shuddered at the thought of him. With his grand ideas of duty, he would be for giving up Leopold that very moment! Naturally the clergyman was the one to go to—and Mr. Wingfold had himself done wrong. But he had confessed it! No—he was a poor creature, and would not hold his tongue! She shook at every knock at the door, every ring at the bell, lest it should be the police. To be sure he had been comparatively little

there, and naturally they would seek him first at Golds-
wyre ; but where next ? At Glaston, of course. Every
time a servant entered the room she turned away lest
her ears should make her countenance a traitor. The
police might be watching the house, and might follow her
when she went to him ! With her opera-glass she ex-
amined the meadow, then ran to the bottom of the gar-
den, and lying down, peered over the sunk fence. But
not a human being was in sight. Next she put on her
bonnet with the pretence of shopping, to see if there
were any suspicious-looking persons in the street. But
she did not meet a single person unknown to her be-
tween her aunt's door and Mr. Drew the linen-draper's.
There she bought a pair of gloves, and walked quietly
back, passing the house, and going on to the Abbey,
without meeting one person at whom she had to look
twice.

All the time her consciousness was like a single in-
tense point of light in the middle of a darkness it could
do nothing to illuminate. She knew nothing but that
her brother lay in that horrible empty house, and that,
if his words were not the ravings of a maniac, the law,
whether it yet suspected him or not, was certainly after
him, and if it had not yet struck upon his trail, was
every moment on the point of finding it, and must
sooner or later come up with him. She *must* save him—
all that was left of him to save ! But poor Helen knew
very little about saving.

One thing more she became suddenly aware of as she
re-entered the house—the possession of a power of dis-

simulation, of hiding herself, hitherto strange to her, for hitherto she had had nothing, hardly even a passing dislike, to conceal. The consciousness brought only exultation with it, for her nature was not yet delicate enough to feel the jar of the thought that neither words nor looks must any more be an index to what lay within her.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DAYLIGHT VISIT.

BUT she could not rest. When would the weary day be over, and the longed-for rather than welcome night appear? Again she went into the garden, and down to the end of it, and looked out over the meadow. Not a creature was in sight except a red and white cow, a child gathering buttercups, and a few rooks crossing from one field to another. It was a glorious day; the sun seemed the very centre of conscious peace. And now first, strange to say, Helen began to know the bliss of bare existence under a divine sky, in the midst of a divine air, the two making a divine summer, which throbbed with the presence of the creative spirit—but as something apart from her now, something she had had but had lost, which could never more be hers. How could she ever be glad again, with such a frightful fact in her soul! Away there beyond those trees lay her unhappy brother in the lonely house, now haunted indeed. Perhaps he lay there dead! The horrors of the morning or his own hand might have slain him. She

must go to him. She would defy the very sun, and go in the face of the universe. Was he not her brother?—Was there no help anywhere? no mantle for this sense of soul-nakedness that had made her feel as if her awful secret might be read a mile away, lying crimson and livid in the bottom of her heart? She dared hardly think of it, lest the very act should betray the thing of darkness to the world of light around her. Nothing but the atmosphere of another innocent soul could shield hers, and she had no friend. What did people do when their brothers did awful deeds? She had heard of praying to God—had indeed herself told her brother to pray, but it was all folly—worse, priestcraft. As if such things *and* a God could exist together! Yet, even with the thought of denial in her mind, she looked up, and gazed earnestly into the wide, innocent, mighty space, as if by searching she might find some one. Perhaps she *ought* to pray. She could see no likelihood of a God, and yet something pushed her towards prayer. What if all this had come upon her and Poldie because she never prayed! If there were such horrible things in the world, although she had never dreamed of them—if they could come so near her, into her very soul, making her feel like a murderess, might there not be a God also, though she knew nothing of his whereabouts or how to reach him and gain a hearing? Certainly if things went with such hellish possibilities at the heart of them, and there was no hand at all to restrain or guide or restore, the world was a good deal worse place than either the methodists or the positivists made it out to

be. In the form of feelings, not of words, hardly even of thoughts, things like these passed through her mind as she stood on the top of the sunk fence and gazed across the flat of sunny green before her. She could almost have slain herself to be rid of her knowledge and the awful consciousness that was its result. *She* would have found no difficulty in that line of Macbeth, "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself."—But all this time there was her brother! She *must* go to him. "God hide me!" she cried within her. "But how can he hide me," she thought, "when I am hiding a murderer?" "O God!" she cried again, and this time in an audible murmur, "I am his sister, thou knowest!" Then she turned, walked back to the house, and sought her aunt.

"I have got a little headache," she said, quite coolly, "and I want a long walk. Don't wait luncheon for me. It is such a glorious day! I shall go by the Millpool road, and across the park. Good-by till tea, or perhaps dinner-time even."

"Hadn't you better have a ride and be back to luncheon? I shan't want Jones to-day," said her aunt mournfully, who, although she had almost given up birthdays, thought her niece need not quite desert her on the disagreeable occasion.

"I'm not in the humor for riding, aunt. Nothing will do me good but a walk. I shall put some luncheon in my bag."

She went quietly out by the front door, walked slowly, softly, statelily along the street and out of the town.

and entered the park by the lodge-gate. She saw Rachel at her work in the kitchen as she passed, and heard her singing in a low and weak but very sweet voice, which went to her heart like a sting, making the tall, handsome, rich lady envy the poor distorted atom who, through all the fogs of her winter, had yet something in her that sought such utterance. But, indeed, if all her misery had been swept away like a dream, Helen might yet have envied the dwarf ten times more than she did now, had she but known how they stood compared with each other. For the being of Helen to that of Rachel was as a single, untwinned primary cell to a finished brain ; as the peeping of a chicken to the song of a lark—I had almost said, to a sonata of Beethoven.

“ Good-day, Rachel,” she said, calling as she passed, in a kindly, even then rather condescending voice, through the open door, where a pail of water, just set down, stood rocking the sun on its heaving surface, and flashing it out again into the ocean of the light. It seemed to poor Helen a squalid abode, but it was a home-like palace, and fairly furnished in comparison with the suburban villa and shop-upholstery which typified the house of her spirit—now haunted by a terrible secret walking through its rooms, and laying a bloody hand upon all their whitenesses.

There was no sound all the way as she went but the noise of the birds and an occasional clank from the new building far away. At last, with beating heart and scared soul, she was within the high garden-wall, making her way through the rank growth of weeds and

bushes to the dismal house. She entered trembling, and the air felt as if death had been before her. Hardly would her limbs carry her, but with slow step she reached the hidden room. He lay as she had left him. Was he asleep, or dead? She crept near and laid her hand on his forehead. He started to his feet in an agony of fright. She soothed and reassured him as best she was able. When the paroxysm relaxed,

“You didn’t whistle,” he said.

“No; I forgot,” answered Helen, shocked at her own carelessness. “But if I had, you would not have heard me: you were fast asleep.”

“A good thing I was! And yet no! I wish I had heard you, for then by this time I should have been beyond their reach.”

Impulsively he showed her the short, dangerous-looking weapon he carried. Helen stretched out her hand to take it, but he hurriedly replaced it in his pocket.

“I will find some water for you to wash with,” said Helen. “There used to be a well in the garden, I remember. I have brought you a shirt.”

With some difficulty she found the well, all but lost in matted weeds under an ivy-tod, and in the saucer of a flower-pot she carried him some water, and put the garment with the horrible spot in her bag, to take it away and destroy it. Then she made him eat and drink. He did whatever she told him, with a dull yet doglike obedience. His condition was much changed; he had a stupefied look, and seemed only half awake to his terrible situation. Yet he answered what questions she

put to him even too readily—with an indifferent matter-of-factness, indeed, more dreadful than any most passionate outburst. But at the root of the apparent apathy lay despair and remorse—worn, like gorged and sleeping tigers far back in their dens. Only the dull torpedo of misery was awake, lying motionless on the bottom of the deepest pool of his spirit.

The mood was favorable to the drawing of his story from him, but there are more particulars in the narrative I am now going to give than Helen at that time learned.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LEOPOLD'S STORY.

WHILE yet a mere boy, scarcely more than sixteen, Leopold had made acquaintance with the family of a certain manufacturer, who, having retired from business with a rapidly gained fortune, had some years before purchased an estate a few miles from Goldswyre, his uncle's place. Their settling in the neighborhood was not welcome to the old-fashioned, long-rooted family of the Lingards; but although they had not called upon them, they could not help meeting them occasionally. Leopold's association with them commenced just after he had left Eton, between which time and his going up to Cambridge he spent a year in reading with his cousins' tutor. It was at a ball he first saw Emmeline, the eldest of the family. She had but lately returned from a school at which from the first she had had for her bedfellow a black ewe. It was not a place where any blackness under that of pitch was likely to attract notice, being one of those very ordinary and very common schools where every thing is done that is done, first for manners, then

for accomplishments, and lastly for information, leaving all the higher faculties and endowments of the human being as entirely unconsidered as if they had no existence. Taste, feeling, judgment, imagination, conscience, are in such places left to look after themselves, and the considerations presented to them and duties required of them as religious, are only fitted to lower still further such moral standard as they may possess. Schools of this kind send out, as their quota of the supply of mothers for the ages to come, young women who will consult a book of etiquette as to what is lady-like ; who always think what is the mode, never what is beautiful ; who read romances in which the wickedness is equalled only by the shallowness ; who write questions to weekly papers concerning points of behavior ; and place their whole or chief delight in making themselves attractive to men. Some such girls look lady-like and interesting, and many of them are skilled in the arts that meet their fullest development in a nature whose sense of existence is rounded by its own reflection in the mirror of a self-consciousness falsified by vanity. Once understood, they are for a sadness or a loathing, after the nature that understands them ; till then, they are to the beholder such as they desire to appear, while under the fair outside lies a nature whose vulgarity, if the most thorough of changes do not in the mean time supervene, will manifest itself hideously on the approach of middle age, that is, by the time when habituation shall have destroyed the restraints of diffidence. Receiving ever fresh and best assurance of their own consequence in the atten-

tion and admiration of men, such girls are seldom capable of any real attachment, and the marvel is that so few of them comparatively disgrace themselves after marriage.

Whether it was the swarthy side of his nature, early ripened under the hot Indian sun, that found itself irresistibly drawn to the widening of its humanity in the flaxen fairness of Emmeline, or the Saxon element in him seeking back to its family—it might indeed have been both, our nature admitting of such marvellous complexity in its unity—he fell in love with her, if not in the noblest yet in a very genuine though at the same time very passionate way; and as she had, to use a Scots proverb, a crop for all corn, his attentions were acceptable to her. Had she been true-hearted enough to know any thing of that love whose name was forever suffering profanation upon her lips, she would, being at least a year and a half older than he, have been too much of a woman to encourage his approaches—would have felt he was a boy and must not be allowed to fancy himself a man. But to be just, he did look to English eyes older than he was. And then he was very handsome, distinguished-looking, of a good family, which could in no sense be said of her, and with high connections—at the same time a natural contrast to herself, and personally attractive to her. The first moment she saw his great black eyes blaze, she accepted the homage, laid it on the altar of her self-worship, and ever after sought to see them lighted up afresh in worship of her only divinity. To be feelingly aware of her power over him, to play

upon him as on an instrument, to make his cheek pale or glow, his eyes flash or fill as she pleased, was a game almost too delightful.

One of the most potent means for producing the humano-atmospheric play in which her soul thus rejoiced, and one whose operation was to none better known than to Emmeline, was jealousy, and for its generation she had all possible facilities, for there could not be a woman in regard of whom jealousy was more justifiable on any ground except that of being worth it. So far as it will reach, however, it must be remembered, in mitigation of judgment, that she had no gauge in herself equal to the representation of a tithe of the misery whose signs served to lift her to the very Paradise of falsehood: she knew not what she did, and possibly knowledge might have found in her some pity and abstinence. But when a woman, in her own nature cold, takes delight in rousing passion, she will, selfishly confident in her own safety, go to strange lengths in kindling and fanning the flame which is the death of the other.

It is far from my intention to follow the disagreeable topic across the pathless swamp through which an elaboration of its phases would necessarily drag me. Of morbid anatomy, save for the setting forth of cure, I am not fond, and here there is nothing to be said of cure. What concerns me as a narrator is, that Emmeline consoled and irritated and reconsoled Leopold, until she had him her very slave, and the more her slave that by that time he knew something of her character. The knowledge took from him what little repose she had left

him ; he did no more good at school, and went to Cambridge with the conviction that the woman to whom he had given his soul would be doing things in his absence the sight of which would drive him mad. Yet somehow he continued to live, reassured now and then by the loving letters she wrote to him, and relieving his own heart while he fostered her falsehood by the passionate replies he made to them.

From a sad accident of his childhood, he had become acquainted with something of the influences of a certain baneful drug, to the use of which one of his attendants was addicted, and now at college, partly from curiosity, partly from a desire to undergo its effects, but chiefly in order to escape from ever gnawing and passionate thought, he began to make *experiments* in its use. Experiment called for repetition—in order to verification, said the fiend—and repetition led first to a longing after its effects, and next to a mad appetite for the thing itself ; so that by the time of which my narrative treats he was on the verge of absolute slavery to its use, and in imminent peril of having to pass the rest of his life in alternations of ecstasy and agony, divided by dull spaces of misery, the ecstasies growing rarer and rarer, and the agonies more and more frequent, intense, and lasting ; until at length the dethroned Apollo found himself chained to a pillar of his own ruined temple, which the sirocco was fast filling with desert sand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LEOPOLD'S STORY CONCLUDED.

HE knew from her letters that they were going to give a ball, at which as many as pleased should be welcome in fancy dresses, and masked if they chose. The night before it he had a dream, under the influence of his familiar no doubt, which made him so miserable and jealous that he longed to see her as a wounded man longs for water, and the thought arose of going down to the ball, not exactly in disguise, for he had no mind to act a part, but masked so that he should not be recognized as uninvited, and should have an opportunity of watching Emmeline, concerning whose engagement with a young cavalry officer there had lately been reports, which, however, before his dream, had caused him less uneasiness than many such preceding. The same moment the thought was a resolve.

I must mention that no one whatever knew the degree of his intimacy with Emmeline, or that he had any ground for considering her engaged to him. Secrecy

added much to the zest of Emmeline's pleasures. Every one knew that he was a devoted admirer—but therein to be classed with a host.

For concealment he contented himself with a large travelling cloak, a tall felt hat, and a black silk mask.

He entered the grounds with an arrival of guests, and, knowing the place perfectly, contrived to see something of her behavior while he watched for an opportunity of speaking to her alone—a quest of unlikely success. Hour after hour he watched, and all the time never spoke or was spoken to.

Those who are acquainted with the mode of operation of the drug to which I have referred, are aware that a man may be fully under its influences without betraying to the ordinary observer that he is in a condition differing from that of other men. But, in the living dream wherein he walks, his feeling of time and of space is so enlarged, or perhaps, I rather think, so subdivided to the consciousness, that every thing about him seems infinite both in duration and extent; the action of a second has in it a multitudinous gradation of progress, and a line of space is marked out into millionths, of every one of which the consciousness takes note. At the same time his senses are open to every impression from things around him, only they appear to him in a strangely exalted metamorphosis, the reflex of his own mental exaltation either in bliss or torture, while the fancies of the man mingle with the facts thus introduced and modify and are in turn modified by them; whereby out of the chaos arises the mountain of an

Earthly Paradise, whose roots are in the depths of hell; and whether the man be with the divine air and the clear rivers and the thousand-hued flowers on the top, or down in the ice-lake with the tears frozen to hard lumps in the hollows of his eyes so that he can no more have even the poor consolation of weeping, is but the turning of a hair, so far at least as his will has to do with it. The least intrusion of any thing painful, of any jar that can not be wrought into the general harmony of the vision, will suddenly alter its character, and from the seventh heaven of speechless bliss the man may fall plumb down into gulfs of horrible and torturing, it may be loathsome imaginings.

Now Leopold had taken a dose of the drug on his journey, and it was later than usual, probably because of the motion, ere it began to take effect. He had indeed ceased to look for any result from it, when all at once, as he stood among the laburnums and lilacs of a rather late spring, something seemed to burst in his brain, and that moment he was Endymion waiting for Diana in her interlunar grove, while the music of the spheres made the blossoms of a stately yet flowering forest tremble all with conscious delight.

Emboldened by his new condition, he drew nigh the house. They were then passing from the ball to the supper room, and he found the tumult so distasteful to his mood of still ecstasy that he would not have entered had he not remembered that he had in his pocket a note ready if needful to slip into her hand, containing only the words, "Meet me for one long minute at the circle"

—a spot well known to both. He threw his cloak Spanish fashion over his left shoulder, slouched his hat, and entering, stood in a shadowy spot she must pass in going to or from the supper room. There he waited, with the note hid in his hand, a long time, yet not a weary one, such visions of loveliness passed before his entranced gaze. At length *she* also passed, lovely as the Diana whose dress she had copied—not quite so perfectly as she had abjured her manners. She leaned trustingly on the arm of some one, but Leopold never even looked at him. He slid the note into her hand, which hung ungloved as inviting confidences. With an instinct quickened and sharpened tenfold by much practice, her fingers instantly closed upon it, but not a muscle belonging to any other part of her betrayed the intrusion of a foreign body: I do not believe her heart gave one beat the more to the next minute. She passed gracefully on, her swan's-neck shining; and Leopold hastened out to one of the windows of the ball-room, there to feast his eyes upon her loveliness. But when he caught sight of her whirling in the waltz with the officer of dragoons whose name he had heard coupled with hers, and saw her flash on him the light and power of eyes which were to him the windows of all the heaven he knew, as they swam together in the joy of the rhythm, of the motion, of the music, suddenly the whole frame of the dream wherein he wandered trembled, shook, fell down into the dreary vaults that underlie all the airy castles that have other foundation than the will of the eternal Builder. With the suddenness of the dark that follows

the lightning, the music changed to a dissonant clash of multitudinous cymbals, the resounding clang of brazen doors, and the hundred-toned screams of souls in torture. The same moment, from halls of infinite scope, where the very air was a soft tumult of veiled melodies ever and anon twisted into inextricable knots of harmony—under whose skyey domes he swept upborne by chords of sound throbbing up against great wings mighty as thought, yet in their motions as easy and subtle, he found himself lying on the floor of a huge vault, whose black slabs were worn into many hollows by the bare feet of the damned as they went and came between the chambers of their torture opening off upon every side, whence issued all kinds of sickening cries, and mingled with the music to which, with whips of steel, hellish executioners urged the dance whose every motion was an agony. His soul fainted within him, and the vision changed. When he came to himself, he lay on the little plot of grass among the lilacs and laburnums where he had asked Emmeline to meet him. Fevered with jealousy and the horrible drug, his mouth was parched like an old purse, and he found himself chewing at the grass to ease its burning and drought. But presently the evil thing resumed its sway, and fancies usurped over facts. He was lying in an Indian jungle, close by the cave of a beautiful tigress, which crouched within, waiting only the first sting of reviving hunger to devour him. He could hear her breathing as she slept, but he was fascinated, paralyzed, and could not escape, knowing that, even if with

mighty effort he succeeded in moving a finger, that motion would suffice to wake her, and she would spring upon him and tear him to pieces. Years upon years passed thus, and still he lay on the grass in the jungle, and still the beautiful tigress slept. But however far apart the knots upon the string of time may lie, they must pass: an angel in white stood over him; his fears vanished; the waving of her wings cooled him; and she was the angel whom he had loved, and loved from all eternity, in whom was his ever-and-only rest. She lifted him to his feet, she gave him her hand: they walked away, and the tigress was asleep forever. For miles and miles, as it seemed to his exaltation, they wandered away into the woods, to wander in them forever, the same violet blue, flashing with roseate stars, forever looking in through the tree-tops, and the great leafy branches hushing, ever hushing them, as with the voices of child-watching mothers, into peace, whose depth is bliss.

“Have you nothing to say now I am come?” said the angel.

“I have said all. I am at rest,” answered the mortal.

“I am going to be married to Captain Hodges,” said the angel.

And with the word, the forest of heaven vanished, and the halls of Eblis did not take their place: a worse hell was there—the cold reality of an earth abjured, and a worthless maiden walking by his side. He stood and turned to her. The shock had mastered the drug. They were only in the little wooded hollow, a

hundred yards from the house. The blood throbbed in his head as from the piston of an engine. A horrid sound of dance-music was in his ears. Emmeline, his own, stood in her white dress, looking up in his face, with the words just parted from her lips, "I am going to be married to Captain Hodges." The next moment she threw her arms round his neck, pulled his face to hers, and kissed him and clung to him.

"Poor Leopold!" she said, and looked in his face with her electric battery at full power; "does it make him miserable, then? But you know it could not have gone on like this between you and me forever! It was very dear while it lasted, but it must come to an end."

Was there a glimmer of real pity and sadness in those wondrous eyes? She laughed—was it a laugh of despair or of exultation?—and hid her face on his bosom. And what was it that awoke in Leopold? Had the drug resumed its power over him? Was it rage at her mockery, or infinite compassion for her despair? Would he slay a demon, or ransom a spirit from hateful bonds? Would he save a woman from disgrace and misery to come? or punish her for the vilest falsehood? Who can tell? for Leopold himself never could. Whatever the feeling was, its own violence erased it from his memory, and left him with a knife in his hand and Emmeline lying motionless at his feet. It was a knife the Scotch highlanders call a *skean-dhu*, sharp-pointed as a needle, sharp-edged as a razor, and with one blow of it he had cleft her heart, and she never cried or laughed any more in that body whose charms she had degraded

to the vile servitude of her vanity. The next thing he remembered was standing on the edge of the shaft of a deserted coalpit, ready to cast himself down. Whence came the change of resolve he could not tell, but he threw in his cloak and mask, and fled. The one thought in his miserable brain was his sister. Having murdered one woman, he was fleeing to another for refuge. Helen would save him.

How he had found his way to his haven he had not an idea. Searching the newspapers, Helen learned that a week had elapsed between the "mysterious murder of a young lady in Yorkshire" and the night on which he came to her window.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SISTERHOOD. •



ELL, Poldie, after all I would rather be you than she!" cried Helen indignantly, when she had learned the whole story.

It was far from the wisest thing to say, but she meant it, and clasped her brother to her bosom.

Straightway the poor fellow began to search for all that man could utter in excuse, nay in justification, not of himself but of the woman he had murdered, appropriating all the blame. But Helen had recognized in Emmeline the selfishness which is the essential murderer, nor did it render her more lenient towards her that the same moment, with a start of horror, she caught a transient glimpse of the same in herself. But the discovery wrought in the other direction, and the tenderness she now lavished upon Leopold left all his hopes far behind. Her brother's sin had broken wide the feebly flowing springs of her conscience, and she saw that in idleness and ease and drowsiness of soul she had been forgetting and neglecting even the being she

loved best in the universe. In the rushing confluence of love, truth, and indignation, to atone for years of half-love, half-indifference, as the past now appeared to her, she would have spoiled him terribly, heaping on him caresses, and assurances that he was far the less guilty and the more injured of the two ; but Leopold's strength was exhausted, and he fell back in a faint.

While she was occupied with his restoration, many things passed through her mind. Among the rest she saw it would be impossible for her to look after him sufficiently where he was, that the difficulty of feeding him even would be great, that very likely he was on the borders of an illness, when he would require constant attention, that the danger of discovery was great—in short, that some better measures must be taken for his protection and the possibility of her ministrations. If she had but a friend to consult ! Ever that thought returned. Alas ! she had none on whose counsel, or discretion either, she could depend ! When at length he opened his eyes, she told him she must leave him now, but when it was dark she would come again, and stay with him till dawn. Feebly he assented, seeming but half aware of what she said, and again closed his eyes. While he lay thus she gained possession of his knife. It left its sheath behind it, and she put it naked in her pocket. As she went from the room, feeling like a mother abandoning her child in a wolf-haunted forest, his eyes followed her to the door with a longing, wild, hungry look, and she felt the look following her still

through the wood and across the park and into her chamber, while the knife in her pocket felt like a spell-bound demon waiting his chance to work them both a mischief. She locked her door and took it out, and as she put it carefully away, fearful lest any attempt to destroy it might but lead to its discovery, she caught sight of her brother's name engraved in full upon the silver mounting of the handle. "What if he had left it behind him!" she thought with a shudder.

But a reassuring strength had risen in her mind with Leopold's disclosure. More than once on her way home she caught herself reasoning that the poor boy had not been to blame at all; that he could not help it; that she had deserved nothing less. Her conscience speedily told her that in consenting to such a thought she herself would be a murderess. Love her brother she must; excuse him she might, for honest excuse is only justice; but to uphold the deed would be to take the part of hell against heaven. Still the murder did not, would not seem so frightful after she had heard the whole tale, and she found it now required far less effort to face her aunt. If she was not the protectress of the innocent, she was of the grievously wronged, and the worst wrong done him was the crime he had been driven to do. She lay down and slept until dinner-time, woke refreshed, and sustained her part during the slow meal, heartened by the expectation of seeing her brother again, and in circumstances of less anxiety, when the friendly darkness had come and all eyes but theirs were closed. She talked to her aunt and a lady who dined

with them as if she had the freest heart in the world ; the time passed ; the converse waned ; the hour arrived ; adieus were said ; drowsiness came. All the world of Glaston was asleep ; the night on her nest was brooding upon the egg of to-morrow ; the moon was in darkness ; and the wind was blowing upon Helen's hot forehead as she slid like a thief across the park.

Her mind was in a tumult of mingled feelings, all gathered about the form of her precious brother. One moment she felt herself ministering to the father she had loved so dearly, in protecting his son ; the next, the thought of her father had vanished, and all was love for the boy whose memories filled the shadow of her childhood ; about whom she had dreamed night after night as he crossed the great sea to come to her ; who had crept into her arms timidly, and straightway turned into the daintiest, merriest playmate ; who had charmed her even in his hot-blooded rages, when he rushed at her with whatever was in his hand at the moment. Then she had laughed and dared him, now she shuddered to remember. Again—and this was the feeling that generally prevailed—she was a vessel overflowing with the mere woman-passion of protection : the wronged, abused, maddened, oppressed, hunted human thing was dependent upon her, and her alone, for any help or safety he was ever to find. Sometimes it was the love of a mother for her sick child ; sometimes that of a tigress crouching over her wounded cub and licking its hurts. All was colored with admiration of his beauty and grace, and mingled with boundless pity for

their sad overclouding and defeature! Nor was the sense of wrong to herself in wrong to her own flesh and blood wanting. The sum of all was a passionate devotion of her being to the service of her brother.

I suspect that at root the loves of the noble wife, the great-souled mother, and the true sister, are one. Anyhow, they are all but glints on the ruffled waters of humanity of the one changeless enduring Light.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SICK CHAMBER.



HE had reached the little iron gate, which hung on one hinge only, and was lifting it from the ground to push it open, when sudden through the stillness came a frightful cry. Had they found him already? Was it a life-and-death struggle going on within? For one moment she stood rooted; the next she flew to the door. When she entered the hall, however, the place was silent as a crypt. Could it have been her imagination? Again, curdling her blood with horror, came the tearing cry, a sort of shout of agony. All in the dark she flew up the stair, calling him by name, fell twice, rose as if on wings, and flew again until she reached the room. There all was silence and darkness. With trembling hands she found her match-box and struck a light, uttering all the time every soothing word she could think of, while her heart quavered in momentary terror of another shriek. It came just as the match flamed up in her fingers, and an

answering shriek from her bosom tore its way through her clenched teeth, and she shuddered like one in an ague. There sat her brother on the edge of the bedstead, staring before him with fixed eyes and terror-stricken countenance. He had not heard her enter, and saw neither the light nor her who held it. She made haste to light the candle, with mighty effort talking to him still, in gasps and chokings, but in vain: the ghastly face continued unchanged, and the wide-open eyes remained fixed. She seated herself at his side and threw her arms around him. It was like embracing a marble statue, so moveless, so irresponsive was he. But presently he gave a kind of shudder, the tension of his frame relaxed, and the soul which had been absorbed in its own visions came forward to its windows, cast from them a fleeting glance, then dropped the curtains.

“Is it you, Helen?” he said, shuddering, as he closed his eyes and laid his head on her shoulder. His breath was like that of a furnace. His skin seemed on fire. She felt his pulse: it was galloping. He was in a fever—brain-fever probably—and what was she to do? A thought came to her. Yes, it was the only possible thing. She would take him home. There, with the help of the household, she might have a chance of concealing him—a poor one, certainly; but here, how was she even to keep him to the house in his raving fits?

“Poldie, dear!” she said, “you must come with me. I am going to take you to my own room, where I can

nurse you properly and need not leave you. Do you think you could walk as far?"

"Walk! Yes; quite well: why not?"

"I am afraid you are going to be ill, Poldie; but, however ill you may feel, you must promise me to try to make as little noise as you can, and never cry out if you can help it. When I do like this," she went on, laying her finger on his lips, "you must be silent altogether."

"I will do whatever you tell me, Helen, if you will only promise not to leave me, and, when they come for me, to give me poison."

She promised, and made haste to obliterate every sign that the room had been occupied. She then took his arm and led him out. He was very quiet—too quiet and submissive, she thought—seemed sleepy, revived a little when they reached the open air, presently grew terrified, and kept starting and looking about him as they crossed the park, but never spoke a word. By the door in the sunk fence they reached the garden, and were soon in Helen's chamber, where she left him to get into bed while she went to acquaint her aunt of his presence in the house. Hard and unreasonable, like most human beings, where her prejudices were concerned, she had, like all other women, sympathy with those kinds of suffering which by experience she understood. Mental distress was beyond her, but for the solace of another's pain she would even have endured a portion herself. When therefore she heard Helen's story, how her brother had come to her window, that he was ill with brain-

fever as she thought, and talked wildly, she quite approved of her having put him to bed in her own room, and would have got up to help in nursing him. But Helen persuaded her to have her night's rest, and begged her to join with her in warning the servants not to mention his presence in the house, on the ground that it might get abroad that he was out of his mind. They were all old and tolerably faithful, and Leopold had been from childhood such a favorite that she hoped thus to secure their silence.

"But, child, he must have the doctor," said her aunt.

"Yes; but I will manage him. What a good thing old Mr. Bird is gone! He was such a gossip! We must call in the new doctor, Mr. Faber. I shall see that he understands. He has his practice to make, and will mind what I say."

"Why, child, you are as cunning as an old witch!" said her aunt. "—It is very awkward," she went on. "What miserable creatures men are—from first to last! Out of one scrape into another from babies to old men! Would you believe it, my dear?—your uncle, one of the best of men and most exemplary of clergymen—why, I had to put on his stockings for him every day he got up! Not that my services stopped there either, I can tell you! Latterly I wrote more than half his sermons for him. He never would preach the same sermon twice, you see. He made that a point of honor; and the consequence was that at last he had to come to me. His sermons were nothing the losers, I trust, or our congregation either. I used the same

commentaries he did, and you would hardly believe how much I enjoyed the work.—Poor dear boy! we must do what we can for him.”

“ I will call you if I find it necessary, aunt. I must go to him now, for he can not bear me out of his sight. Don't, please, send for the doctor till I see you again.”

When she got back to her room, to her great relief she found Leopold asleep. The comfort of the bed after his terrible exhaustion and the hardships he had undergone, had combined with the drug under whose influence he had more or less been ever since first he appeared at Helen's window, and he slept soundly.

But when he woke he was in a high fever, and Mr. Faber was summoned. He found the state of his patient such that no amount of wild utterance could have surprised him. His brain was burning and his mind all abroad; he tossed from side to side and talked vehemently, but even to Helen unintelligibly.

Mr. Faber had not attended medical classes and walked the hospitals without undergoing the influences of the unbelief prevailing in those regions, where, on the strength of a little knowledge of the human frame, cart-loads of puerile ignorance and anile vulgarity, not to mention obscenity, are uttered in the name of truth by men who know nothing whatever of the things that belong to the deeper nature believed in by the devout and simple, and professed also by many who are perhaps yet farther from a knowledge of its affairs than those who thus treat them with contempt. When, therefore, he came to practise in Glaston, he brought his

quota of yeast into the old bottle of that ancient and slumberous town. But as he had to gain for himself a practice, he was prudent enough to make no display of the cherished emptiness of his swept and garnished rooms. I do not mean to blame him. He did not fancy himself the holder of any Mephistophelean commission for the general annihilation of belief like George Bascombe, only one from nature's bureau of ways and means for the cure of the ailing body—which indeed, to him, comprised all there was of humanity. He had a cold, hard, business-like manner, which, however admirable on some grounds, destroyed any hope Helen had cherished of finding in him one to whom she might disclose her situation.

He proved himself both wise and skilful, yet it was weeks before Leopold began to mend. By the time the fever left him he was in such a prostrate condition that it was very doubtful whether yet he could live, and Helen had had to draw largely even upon her fine stock of health.

Her ministration continued most exhausting. Yet now she thought of her life as she had never thought of it before—namely, as a thing of worth. It had grown precious to her since it had become the stay of Leopold's. Notwithstanding the terrible state of suspense and horror in which she now lived, seeming to herself at times an actual sharer in her brother's guilt, she would yet occasionally find herself exulting in the thought of being the guardian angel he called her. Now that by his bedside hour plodded after hour in

something of sameness and much of weariness, she yet looked back on her past as on the history of a slug.

During all the time she scarcely saw her cousin George, and indeed, she could hardly tell why, shrank from him. In the cold, bright, shadowless, north-windy day of his presence there was little consolation to be gathered, and for strength—to face him made a fresh demand upon the little she had. Her physical being had certainly lost. But the countenance which, after a long interval of absence, the curate at length one morning descried in the midst of the congregation, had, along with its pallor and look of hidden and suppressed trouble, gathered the expression of a higher order of existence. Not that she had drawn a single consoling draught from any one of the wells of religion, or now sought the church for the sake of any reminder of something found precious: the great quiet place drew her merely with the offer of its two hours' restful stillness. The thing which had elevated her was simply the fact that, without any thought, not to say knowledge of him, she had yet been doing the will of the Heart of the world. True she had been but following her instinct, and ministering, not to humanity from an enlarged affection, but only to the one being she best loved in all the world—a small merit surely!—yet was it the beginning of the way of God, the lovely way, and therefore the face of the maiden had begun to shine with a light which no splendor of physical health, no consciousness of beauty, however just, could have kindled there.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CURATE'S PROGRESS.

THE visits of Wingfold to the little people at the gate not only became frequent, but more and more interesting to him, and as his office occasioned few demands on his attention, Polwarth had plenty of time to give to one who sought instruction in those things which were his very passion. He had never yet had any pupil but his niece, and to find another, and one whose soul was so eager after that of which he had such long-gathered store to dispense, was a keen, pure, and solemn delight. It was that for which he had so often prayed—an outlet for the living waters of his spirit into dry and thirsty lands. He had not much faculty for writing, although now and then he would relieve his heart in verse; and if he had a somewhat remarkable gift of discourse, to attempt public utterance would have been but a vain exposure of his person to vulgar mockery. In Wingfold he had found a man docile and obedient, both thirsting after and recognizant of the truth, and if he

might but aid him in unsealing the well of truth in his own soul, the healing waters might from him flow far and near. Not as the little Zacchæus who pieced his own shortness with the length of the sycamore tree, so to rise above his taller brethren and see Jesus, little Polwarth would lift tall Wingfold on his shoulders, first to see, and then cry aloud to his brethren who was at hand.

For two or three Sundays the curate, largely assisted by his friend, fed his flock with his gleanings from other men's harvests, and already, though it had not yet come to his knowledge, one consequence was that complaints, running together, made a pool of discontent, and a semi-public meeting had been held, wherein was discussed, and not finally negatived, the propriety of communicating with the rector on the subject. Some, however, held that, as the incumbent paid so little attention to his flock, it would be better to appeal to the bishop, and acquaint him with the destitution of that portion of his oversight. But things presently took a new turn, at first surprising, soon alarming to some, and at length to not a few appalling.

Obedient to Polwarth's instructions, Wingfold had taken to his New Testament. At first, as he read and sought to understand, ever and anon some small difficulty, notably, foremost of all, the discrepancy in the genealogies—I mention it merely to show the sort of difficulty I mean—would insect-like shoot out of the darkness and sting him in the face. Some of these he pursued, encountered, crushed—and found he had

gained next to nothing by the victory ; and Polwarth soon persuaded him to let such alone for the present, seeing they involved nothing concerning the man at a knowledge of whom it was his business to arrive. But when it came to the perplexity caused by some of the sayings of Jesus himself, it was another matter. He *must* understand these, he thought, or fail to understand the man. Here Polwarth told him that, if, after all, he seemed to fail, he must conclude that possibly the meaning of the words was beyond him, and that the understanding of them depended on a more advanced knowledge of Jesus himself ; for, while words reveal the speaker, they must yet lie in the light of something already known of the speaker to be themselves intelligible. Between the mind and the understanding of certain hard utterances, therefore, there must of necessity lie a gradation of easier steps. And here Polwarth was tempted to give him a far more important, because more immediately practical hint, but refrained, from the dread of weakening by *presentation*, the force of a truth which, in *discovery*, would have its full effect. For he was confident that the curate, in the temper which was now his, must ere long come immediately upon the truth towards which he was tempted to point him.

On one occasion when Wingfold had asked him whether he saw the meaning of a certain saying of our Lord, Polwarth answered thus :

“ I think I do ; but whether I could at present make you see it I can not tell. I suspect it is one of those

concerning which I have already said that you have yet to understand Jesus better before you can understand them. Let me, just to make the nature of what I state clear to you, ask you one question : tell me, if you can, what, primarily, did Jesus, from his own account of himself, come into the world to do ?”

“ To save it,” answered Wingfold.

“ I think you are wrong,” returned Polwarth. “ Mind, I said *primarily*. You will yourself come to the same conclusion by and by. Either our Lord was a phantom—a heresy of potent working in the minds of many who would be fierce in its repudiation—or he was a very man, uttering the heart of his life that it might become the life of his brethren ; and if so, an honest man can never ultimately fail of getting at what he means. I have seen him described somewhere as a man dominated by the passion of humanity—or something like that. The description does not, to my mind, even shadow the truth. Another passion, if such I may dare to call it, was the light of his life, dominating even that which would yet have been enough to make him lay down his life.”

Wingfold went away pondering.

Though Polwarth read little concerning religion except the New Testament, he could yet have directed Wingfold to several books which might have lent him good aid in his quest after the real likeness of the man he sought ; but he greatly desired that on the soul of his friend the dawn should break over the mountains of Judæa—the first light, I mean, flow from the words themselves of the Son of Man. Sometimes he grew so

excited about his pupil and his progress, and looked so anxiously for the news of light in his darkness, that he could not rest at home, but would be out all day in the park—praying, his niece believed, for the young parson. And little did Wingfold suspect that, now and again when his lamp was burning far into the night because he struggled with some hard saying, the little man was going round and round the house like one muttering charms, only they were prayers for his friend. Ill satisfied with his own feeble affection, he would supplement it with its origin, would lay hold upon the riches of the Godhead, crying for his friend to “the first stock-father of gentleness ;”—folly all, and fair subject of laughter to such as George Bascombe, if there be no God ; but as Polwarth, with his whole, healthy, holy soul, believed there is a God, it was for him but simple common-sense.

Still no daybreak ; and now the miracles had grown troublesome ! Could Mr. Polwarth honestly say that he found no difficulty in believing things so altogether out of the common order of events, and so buried in the darkness and dust of antiquity that investigation was impossible ?

Mr. Polwarth could not say that he had found no such difficulty.

“Then why should the weight of the story,” said Wingfold, “the weight of its proof, I mean, to minds like ours, coming so long after, and by their education incapacitated for believing in such things, in a time when the law of every thing is searched into—”

“And as yet very likely as far from understood as ever,” interposed but not interrupted Polwarth.

“—why should the weight of its proof, I ask, be laid upon such improbable things as miracles? That they are necessarily improbable, I presume you will admit.”

“Having premised that I believed every one recorded,” said Polwarth, “I heartily admit their improbability. But the *weight* of proof is not, and never was, laid upon them. Our Lord did not make much of them, and did them far more for the individual concerned than for the sake of the beholders. I will not, however, talk to you about them now. I will merely say that it is not through the miracles you will find the Lord, though, having found him, you will find him there also. The question for you is not, Are the miracles true? but, Was Jesus true? Again I say, you must find him—the man himself. When you have found him, I may perhaps retort upon you the question, ‘Can you believe such improbable things as the miracles, Mr. Wingfold?’”

The little man showed pretty plainly by the set of his lips that he meant to say no more, and again Wingfold had, with considerable dissatisfaction and no answer, to go back to his New Testament.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CURATE MAKES A DISCOVERY.



AT length, one day, as he was working with a harmony, comparing certain passages between themselves, and as variedly given in the gospels, he fell into a half-thinking, half-dreaming mood, in which his eyes, for some time unconsciously, rested on the verse, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.' It mingled itself with his brooding, and by and by, though yet he was brooding rather than meditating, the form of Jesus had gathered, in the stillness of his mental quiescence, so much of reality that at length he found himself thinking of him as of a true-hearted man, mightily in earnest to help his fellows, who could not get them to mind what he told them.

"Ah!" said the curate to himself, "if I had but seen him, would not I have minded him! would not I have haunted his steps, with question upon question, until I got at the truth!"

Again the more definite thought vanished in the

seething chaos of reverie, which dured unbroken for a time, until again suddenly rose from memory to consciousness and attention the words, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "here am I bothering over words, and questioning about this and that, as if I were testing his fitness for a post I had to offer him, and he all the time claiming my obedience! I can not even, on the spur of the moment at least, tell one thing he wants me to do; and as to doing any thing because he told me—not once did I ever! But then how am I to obey him until I am sure of his right to command? I just want to know whether I am to call him Lord or not. No, that won't do either, for he says, Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? And do I not know—have I ever even doubted that what he said we ought to do, was the right thing to do? Yet here have I, all these years, been calling myself a Christian, ministering, forsooth, in the temple of Christ, as if he were a heathen divinity, who cared for songs and prayers and sacrifices, and can not honestly say I ever once in my life did a thing because he said so, although the record is full of his earnest, even pleading words! I have *not* been an honest man, and how should a dishonest man be a judge over that man who said he was the Christ of God? Would it be any wonder if the things he uttered should be too high and noble to be by such a man recognized as truth?"

With this, yet another saying dawned upon him: *If*

any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

He went into his closet and shut to the door; came out again, and went straight to visit a certain grievous old woman.

The next open result was, that, on the following Sunday, a man went up into the pulpit who, for the first time in his life, believed he had something to say to his fellow-sinners. It was not now the sacred spoil of the best of gleanings or catering that he bore thither with him, but the message given him by a light in his own inward parts, discovering therein the darkness and the wrong.

He opened no sermon case, nor read words from any book, save, with trembling voice, these :

"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

I pause for a moment in my narrative to request the sympathy of such readers as may be capable of affording it, for a man whose honesty makes him appear egotistic. When a man, finding himself in a false position, is yet anxious to do the duties of that position until such time as, if he should not in the mean time have verified it and become able to fill it with honesty, he may honorably leave it, I think he may well be pardoned if, of inward necessity, he should refer to himself in a place where such reference may be either the greatest impiety or the outcome of the truest devotion. In him it was neither: it was honesty—and absorption in the startled gaze of a love that believed it had caught a

glimmer of the passing garment of the Truth. Thus strengthened—might I not say inspired? for what is the love of truth and the joy therein, if not a breathing into the soul of the breath of life from the God of truth?—he looked round upon his congregation as he had never dared until now; saw face after face, and knew it; saw among the rest that of Helen Lingard, so sadly yet not pitifully altered, with a doubt if it could be she; trembled a little with a new excitement, which one less modest or less wise might have taken—how foolishly!—instead of the truth perceived, for the inspiration of the spirit; and, sternly suppressing the emotion, said,

“My hearers, I come before you this morning to utter the first word of truth it has ever been given to *me* to utter.”

His hearers stared both mentally and corporeally.

“Is he going to deny the Bible?” said some. “It will be the last,” said others, “if the rector hear in time how you have been disgracing yourself and profaning his pulpit.”

“And,” the curate went on, “it would be as a fire in my bones did I attempt to keep it back.

“In my room, three days ago, I was reading the strange story of the man who appeared in Palestine saying that he was the Son of God, and came upon those words of his which I have now read in your hearing. At their sound the accuser, Conscience, awoke in my bosom, and asked, ‘Doest thou the things he saith to thee?’ And I thought with myself, ‘Have I this day done any thing he says to me? When did I do any thing

I had heard of him? Did I ever'—to this it came at last.—' Did I ever, in all my life, do one thing because he said to me, *Do this?*' And the answer was *No, never.* Yet there I was, not only calling myself a Christian, but on the strength of my Christianity, it was to be presumed, living among you, and received by you, as your helper on the way to the heavenly kingdom—a living falsehood, walking and talking among you!"

"What a wretch!" said one man to himself, who made a large part of his living by the sale of under-garments whose every stitch was an untacking of the body from the soul of a seamstress. "Bah!" said some. "A hypocrite, by his own confession!" said others. "Exceedingly improper!" said Mrs. Ramshorn. "Unheard-of and most unclerical behavior! And actually to confess such paganism!" For Helen, she waked up a little, began to listen, and wondered what he had been saying that a wind seemed to have blown rustling among the heads of the congregation.

"Having made this confession," Wingfold proceeded, "you will understand that whatever I now say, I say to and of myself as much as to and of any other to whom it may apply."

He then proceeded to show that faith and obedience are one and the same spirit, passing, as it were, from room to room in the same heart: what in the heart we call faith, in the will we call obedience. He showed that the Lord refused absolutely the faith that found its vent at the lips in the worshipping words, and not at the limbs in obedient action—which some present pro-

nounced bad theology, while others said to themselves surely that at least was common sense. For Helen, what she heard might be interesting to clergymen, or people like her aunt who had to do with such matters, but to her it was less than nothing and vanity, whose brother lay at home "sick in heart and sick in head."

But hard thoughts of him could not stay the fountain of Wingfold's utterance, which filled as it flowed. Eager after a right presentation of what truth he saw, he dwelt on the mockery it would be of any man to call him the wisest, the best, the kindest, yea, and the dearest of men, yet never heed either the smallest request or the most urgent entreaty he made.

"A Socinian!" said Mrs. Ramshorn.

"There's stuff in the fellow!" said the rector's churchwarden, who had been brought up a Wesleyan.

"He'd make a fellow fancy he did believe all his grandmother told him!" thought Bascombe.

As he went on, the awakened curate grew almost eloquent. His face shone with earnestness. Even Helen found her gaze fixed upon him, though she had not a notion what he was talking about. He closed at length with these words:

"After the confession I have now made to you, a confession which I have also entreated every one of you to whom it belongs, to make to himself and his God, it follows that I dare not call myself a Christian. How should such a one as I know any thing about that which, if it be true at all, is the loftiest, the one all-absorbing truth in the universe? How should such a fel-

low as I"—he went on, growing scornful at himself in the presence of the truth—"judge of its sacred probabilities? or, having led such a life of simony, be heard when he declares that such a pretended message from God to men seems too good to be true? The things therein contained I declared good, yet went not and did them. Therefore am I altogether out of court, and must not be heard in the matter.

"No, my hearers, I call not myself a Christian, but I call every one here who obeys the word of Jesus, who restrains anger, who declines judgment, who practises generosity, who loves his enemies, who prays for his slanderers, to witness my vow, that I too will henceforth try to obey him, in the hope that he whom he called God and his Father will reveal to me him whom you call your Lord Jesus Christ, that into my darkness I may receive the light of the world!"

"A professed infidel!" said Mrs. Ramshorn. "A clever one too! That was a fine trap he laid for us to prove us all atheists as well as himself! As if any mere mortal *could* obey the instructions of the Saviour! He was divine; we are but human."

She might have added, "And but poor creatures as such," but did not go so far, believing herself more than an average specimen.

But there was one shining face which, like a rising sun of love and light and truth, "pillowed his chin," not "on an orient wave," but on the book-board of a free seat. The eyes of it were full of tears, and the heart behind it was giving that God and Father thanks,

for this was more, far more than he had even hoped for save in the indefinite future. The light was no longer present as warmth or vivification alone, but had begun to shine as light in the heart of his friend, to whom now, praised be God! the way lay open into all truth. And when the words came, in a voice that once more trembled with emotion, "Now to God the Father," he bent down his face, and the poor, stunted, distorted frame and great gray head were grievously shaken with the sobs of a mighty gladness. Truth in the inward parts looked out upon him from the face of one who stood before the people their self-denied teacher! How would they receive it? It mattered not. Those whom the Father had drawn would hear.

Polwarth neither sought the curate in the vestry, waited for him at the church-door, nor followed him to his lodging. He was not of those who compliment a man on his fine sermon. How grandly careless are some men of the risk of ruin their praises are to their friends! "Let God praise him!" said Polwarth; "I will only dare to love him." He would not toy with his friend's waking Psyche.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOPES.

IT was the first Sunday Helen had gone to church since her brother came to her. On the previous Sunday he had passed some crisis and begun to improve, and by the end of the week was so quiet that, longing for a change of atmosphere, and believing he might be left with the housekeeper, she had gone to church. On her return she heard he was no worse, although he had "been a frettin' after her." She hurried to him as if he had been her baby.

"What do you go to church for?" he asked, half-petulantly, like a spoilt child, with languid eyes whence the hard fire had vanished. "What's the use of it?"

He looked at her, waiting for an answer.

"Not much," replied Helen. "I like the quiet and the music, that's all."

He seemed disappointed, and lay still for a few moments.

"In old times," he said at last, "the churches used to

be a refuge : I suppose that is why one can't help feeling as if some safety were to be got from them yet.— Was your cousin George there this morning ?”

“ Yes, he went with us,” answered Helen.

“ I should like to see him. I want somebody to talk to.”

Helen was silent. She was more occupied, however, in answering to herself the question why she shrunk so decidedly from bringing Bascombe into the sick-room than in thinking what she should say to Leopold. The truth was the truth, and why should she object to Leopold's knowing, or at least being told as well as herself, that he need fear no punishment in the next world, whatever he might have to encounter in this ; that there was no frightful God who hated wrong-doing to be terrified at ; that even the badness of own action need not distress him, for he and it would pass away as the blood he had shed had already vanished from the earth ? Ought it not to encourage the poor fellow ? But to what ? To live on and endure his misery, or to put an end to it and himself at once ? Or perhaps to plunge into vice that he might escape the consciousness of guilt and the dread of the law ?

I will not say that exactly such a train of thought as this passed through her mind, but of whatever sort it was, it brought her no nearer to a desire for the light of George Bascombe's presence by the bedside of her guilty brother. At the same time her partiality for her cousin made her justify his exclusion thus : “ George is so good himself, he is only fit for the company of good

people. He would not in the least understand my poor Poldie, and would be too hard upon him."

Since her brother's appearance, in fact, she had seen very little of her cousin, and this not merely because her presence was so much required in the sick-chamber, but because she was herself unwilling to meet him. She had felt, almost without knowing it, that his character was unsympathetic, and that his loud, cold good-nature could never recognize or justify such love as she bore to her brother. Nor was this all; for, remembering how he had upon one occasion expressed himself with regard to criminals, she feared even to look in his face, lest his keen, questioning, unsparing eye should read in her soul that she was the sister of a murderer.

Before this time, however, a hint of light had appeared in the clouds that enwrapped her and Leopold; she had begun to doubt whether he had really committed the crime of which he accused himself. There had been no inquiry after him, except from his uncle, concerning his absence from Cambridge, for which his sudden attack of brain-fever served as more than sufficient excuse. That there had been such a murder the newspapers left her no room to question; but might not the relation in which he stood to the victim, the horror of her death, the insidious approaches of the fever, and the influences of that hateful drug, have combined to call up an hallucination of blood-guiltiness? And what at length all but satisfied her of the truth of her conjecture was that when he began to recover, Leopold seemed himself in doubt at times whether his sense of

guilt had not its origin in some one or other of the many dreams which had haunted him throughout his illness, knowing only too well that it was long since dreams had become to him more real than the greater part of what was going on around him. To this blurring and confusing of consciousness it probably contributed, that in the first stages of the fever he was under the influence of the same drug which had been working upon his brain up to the very moment when he committed the crime.

During the week the hope had almost settled into conviction; and one consequence was that, although she was not a whit more inclined to introduce George Bascombe into the sick-chamber, she found herself not only equal but no longer averse to meeting him; and on the following Saturday, when he presented himself as usual, come to spend the Sunday, she listened to her aunt, and consented to go out with him for a ride—in the evening, however, when Mrs. Ramshorn herself, who had shown Leopold great and genuine kindness, would be able to sit with him. They therefore had dinner early, and Helen went again to her brother's room, unwilling to leave him a moment until she gave up her charge to her aunt.

They had tea together, and Leopold was very quiet. It is wonderful with what success the mind will accommodate itself, in its effort after peace, to the presence of the most torturing thought. But Helen took this quietness for a sign of innocence, not knowing that the state of the feelings is neither test nor gauge of guilt.

The nearer perfection a character is, the louder is the cry of conscience at the appearance of fault ; and, on the other hand, the worst criminals have had the easiest minds.

Helen also was quiet, and fell into a dreamy mood, watching her brother, who every now and then turned on her a look of love and gratitude which moved her heart to its very depths. Not until she heard the horses coming round from the stable did she rise to go and change her dress.

“I shall not be long away from you, Poldie,” she said.

“Do not forget me, Helen,” he returned. “If you forget me, an enemy will think of me.”

His love comforted her, and yet further strengthened her faith in his innocence ; and it was with a kind of half-repose, timid, wavering, and glad, upon her countenance—how different from the old, dull, wooden quiescence !—that she joined her cousin in the hall. A moment, and he had lifted her to the saddle, and was mounted by her side.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RIDE.



SOFT west wind, issuing as from the heart of a golden vase filled with roses, met them the instant they turned out of the street, walking their horses towards the park-gate.

Something—was it in the evening, or was it in his own soul?—had prevailed to the momentary silencing of George Bascombe: it may have been but the influence of the cigar which Helen had begged him to finish. Helen, too, was silent: she felt as if the low red sun, straight into which they seemed to be riding, blotted out her being in the level torrent of his usurping radiance. Neither of them spoke a word until they had passed through the gate into the park.

It was a perfect English summer evening—warm, but not sultry. As they walked their horses up the carriage-way the sun went down, and, as if he had fallen like a live coal into some celestial magazine of color and glow, straightway blazed up a slow explosion of crimson and green in a golden triumph—pure fire, the smoke and fuel gone, and the radiance alone left. And now

Helen received the second lesson of her initiation into the life of nature: she became aware that the whole evening was thinking around her, and as the dusk grew deeper and the night drew closer, the world seemed to have grown dark with its thinking. Of late Helen had been driven herself to think—if not deeply, yet intensely—and so knew what it was like, and felt at home with the twilight.

They turned from the drive on to the turf. Their horses tossed up their heads, and set off, unchecked, at a good pelting gallop across the open park. On Helen's cheek the wind blew cooling, strong, and kind. As if flowing from some fountain above, in an unseen unbanked river, down through the stiller ocean of the air, it seemed to bring to her a vague promise, almost a pre-cognition, of peace—which, however, only set her longing after something—she knew not what—something of which she only knew that it would fill the longing the wind had brought her. The longing grew and extended—went stretching on and on into an infinite of rest. And as they still galloped, and the light-maddened colors sank into smoky-peach and yellow-green and blue-gray, the something swelled and swelled in her soul, and pulled and pulled at her heart, until the tears were running down her face. For fear Bascombe should see them, she gave her horse the rein, and fled from him into the friendly dusk that seemed to grade time into eternity.

Suddenly she found herself close to a clump of trees, which overhung the deserted house. She had made a

great circuit without knowing it. A pang shot to her heart, and her tears ceased to flow. The night, silent with thought, held *that* also in its bosom! She drew rein, turned, and waited for Bascombe.

"What a chase you've given me, Helen!" he cried, while yet pounding away some score of yards off.

"A wild-goose one you mean, cousin?"

"It would have been if I had thought to catch you on this ancient cocktail."

"Don't abuse the old horse, George: he has seen better days. I would gladly have mounted you more to your mind, but you know I could not—except, indeed, I had given you my Fanny, and taken the old horse myself. I have ridden him."

"The lady ought always to be the better mounted," returned George coolly. "For my part, I much prefer it, because then I need not be anxious about whether I am boring her or not: if I am, she can run away."

"You can not suppose I thought you a bore to-night. A more sweetly silent gentleman none could wish for squire."

"Then it was my silence bored you. Shall I tell you what I was thinking about?"

"If you like. I was thinking how pleasant it would be to ride on and on and on into eternity," said Helen.

"That feeling of continuity," returned George, "is a proof of the painlessness of departure. No one can ever know when he ceases to be, because then he is not; and that is how some men come to fancy they feel as if they were going to live forever. But the worst of it is

that they no sooner fancy it than it seems to them a probable as well as a delightful thing to go on and on and never cease. This comes of the man's having no consciousness of ceasing, and when one is comfortable it always seems good to go on. A child is never willing to turn from the dish of which he is eating to another. It is more he wants, not another."

"That is if he likes it," said Helen.

"Every body likes it," said George, "—more or less."

"I am not so sure of *every* body," replied Helen. "Do you imagine that twisted little dwarf-woman that opened the gate for us is content with her lot?"

"No, that is impossible—while she sees and remains what she is. But I said nothing of contentment. I was but thinking of the fools who, whether content or not, yet want to live forever, and so, very conveniently, take their longing for immortality, which they call an idea innate in the human heart, for a proof that immortality is their rightful inheritance."

"How then do you account for the existence and universality of the idea?" asked Helen, who had happened lately to come upon some arguments on the other side.

But while she spoke thus indifferently she felt in her heart like one who wakes from a delicious swim in the fairest of rivers, to find that the clothes have slipped from the bed to the floor: that was all his river and all his swim!

"I account for its existence as I have just said; and

for its universality by denying it. It is *not* universal, for I haven't it."

"At least you will not deny that men, even when miserable, shrink from dying?"

"Any thing, every thing is unpleasant out of its due time. I will allow, for the sake of argument, that the thought of dying is always unpleasant. But wherefore so? Because, in the very act of thinking it, the idea must always be taken *from* the time that suits with it—namely, its own time, when it will at length, and ought at length, to come—and placed in the midst of the lively present, with which assuredly it does not suit. To life, death must be always hateful. In the rush and turmoil of effort; how distasteful even the cave of the hermit, let ever such a splendid view spread abroad before its mouth! But when it comes it will be pleasant enough, for then its time will have come also—the man will be prepared for it by decay and cessation. If one were to tell me that he had that endless longing for immortality, of which hitherto I have only heard at second hand, I would explain it to him thus: Your life, I would say, not being yet complete, still growing, feels in itself the onward impulse of growth, and, unable to think of itself as other than complete, interprets that onward impulse as belonging to the time around it instead of the nature within it. Or rather let me say, the man feels in himself the elements of more, and not being able to grasp the notion of his own completeness, which is so far from him, transposes the feeling of growth and sets it beyond himself, translating it at the same time into an instinct

of duration, a longing after what he calls eternal life. But when the man is complete, then comes decay and brings its own contentment with it—as will also death, when it arrives in its own proper season of fulness and ripeness.”

Helen said nothing in reply. She thought her cousin very clever, but could not enjoy what he said—not in the face of that sky and in the yet lingering reflection of the feelings it had waked in her. He might be right, but now, at least, she wanted no more of it. She even felt as if she would rather cherish a sweet deception for the comfort of the moment in which the weaver’s shuttle flew, than take to her bosom a cold, killing fact.

Such were indeed an unworthy feeling to follow! Of all things let us have the truth—even of fact! But to deny what we can not prove, not even casts into our ice-house a spadeful of snow. What if the warm hope denied should be the truth after all? What if it was the truth in it that drew the soul towards it by its indwelling reality, and its relations with her being, even while she took blame for suffering herself to be enticed by a sweet deception? Alas indeed for men if the life and the truth are not one, but fight against each other! Surely it says something for the divine nature of him that denies the divine, when he yet cleaves to what he thinks the truth, although it denies the life, and blots the way to the better from every chart!

“And what were you thinking of, George?” said Helen, willing to change the subject.

"I was thinking," he answered, "—let me see!—oh! yes. I was thinking of that very singular case of murder. You must have seen it in the newspapers. I have long had a doubt whether I were better fitted for a barrister or a detective. I can't keep my mind off a puzzling case. You must have heard of this one—the girl they found lying in her ball-dress in the middle of a wood, stabbed to the heart?"

"I do remember something of it," answered Helen, gathering a little courage to put into her voice from the fact that her cousin could hardly see her face. "Then the murderer has not been discovered?"

"That is the point of interest. Not a trace of him! Not a soul suspected, even!"

Helen drew a deep breath.

"Had it been in Rome, now!" George went on. "But in a quiet country place in England! The thing seems incredible! So artistically done!—no struggle: just one blow right to the heart, and the assassin gone as if by magic! No weapon dropped! Nothing to give a clue! The whole thing suggests a practised hand. But why such a one for the victim! Had it been some false member of a secret society thus immolated, one could understand it. But a merry girl at a ball! It *is* strange. I *should* like to try the unravelling of it."

"Has nothing, then, been done?" said Helen with a gasp, to hide which she moved in her saddle as if readjusting her habit.

"Oh! every thing—of course! There was instant pur-

suit on the discovery of the body, but they seem to have got on the track of the wrong man—or indeed, for any thing certain, of no man at all. A coast-guardsman says that, on the night, or rather morning, in question, he was approaching a little cove on the shore, not above a mile from the scene of the tragedy, with an eye on what seemed to be two fishermen preparing to launch their boat, when he saw a third man come running down the steep slope from the pastures above, and jump into the stern of it. Ere he could reach the spot they were off and had hoisted two lug-sails. The moon was in the first of her last quarter, and gave light enough for what he reported. But when inquiries founded on this evidence were made, nothing whatever could be discovered concerning boat or men. The next morning no fishing-boat was lacking, and no fisherman would confess to having gone from that cove. The marks of the boat's keel and of the men's feet on the sand, if there ever were any, had been washed out by the tide. It was concluded that the thing had been pre-arranged and provided for, and that the murderer had escaped, probably to Holland. Thereupon telegrams were shot in all directions, but no news could be gathered of any suspicious landing on the opposite coast. There the matter rests, or at least has rested for many weeks. Neither parents, relatives, nor friends appear to have a suspicion of any one."

"Are there no conjectures as to motives?" asked Helen, feeling with joy her power of dissimulation gather strength.

“No end of them. She was a beautiful creature, they say, sweet-tempered as a dove, and of course fond of admiration—whence the conjectures all turn on jealousy. The most likely thing seems, that she had some squire of low degree, of whom neither parents nor friends knew any thing. That they themselves suspect this, appears likely from their more than apathy with regard to the discovery of the villain. I am strongly inclined to take the matter in hand myself.”


“We must get him out of the country as soon as possible,” thought Helen.—“I should hardly have thought it worthy of your gifts, George,” she said, “to turn policeman. For my part, I should not relish hunting down any poor wretch.”

“The sacrifice of individual choice is a claim society has upon each of its members,” returned Bascombe. “Every murderer hanged, or, better, imprisoned for life, is a gain to the community.”

Helen said no more, and presently turned homewards, on the plea that she must not be longer absent from her invalid.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RACHEL AND HER UNCLE.

T was nearly dark when they arrived again at the lodge. Rachel opened the gate for them. Without even a *thank you*, they rode out. She stood for a moment gazing after them through the dusk, then turned with a sigh, and went into the kitchen, where her uncle sat by the fire with a book in his hand.

“How I should like to be as well made as Miss Lingard!” she said, seating herself by the lamp that stood on the deal table. “It *must* be a fine thing to be strong and tall, and able to look this way and that without turning all your body along with your head, like the old man that gathers the leeches in Wordsworth’s poem. And what it must be to sit on a horse as she does! You should have seen her go flying like the very wind across the park! You would have thought she and her horse were cut out of the same piece. I’m dreadfully envious, uncle.”

“No, my child; I know you better than you do yourself. There is a great difference between *I wish I was*

and *I should like to be*—as much as between a grumble and a prayer. To be content is not to be satisfied. No one ought to be satisfied with the imperfect. It is God's will that we should bear, and contentedly—because in hope, looking for the redemption of the body. And we know he has a ready servant who will one day set us free."

"Yes, uncle; I understand. You know I enjoy life: how could I help it and you with me? But I don't think I ever go through the churchyard without feeling a sort of triumph. 'There's for you!' I say sometimes to the little crooked shadow that creeps along by my side across the graves. 'You'll soon be caught and put inside!' But how am I to tell I mayn't be crooked in the next world as well as this? That's what troubles me at times. There might be some necessity for it, you know."

"Then will there be patience to bear it there also;—that you may be sure of. But I do not fear. It were more likely that those who have not thanked God, but prided themselves, that they were beautiful in this world, should be crooked in the next. It would be like Dives and Lazarus, you know. But God does what is best for them as well as for us. We shall find one day that beauty and riches were the best things for those to whom they were given, as deformity and poverty were the best for us."

"I wonder what sort of person I would have been if I had had a straight spine!" said Rachel, laughing.

“Hardly one so dear to your deformed uncle,” said her companion in ugliness.

“Then I’m glad I am as I am,” rejoined Rachel.

“This conscious individuality of ours,” said Polwarth, after a thoughtful silence, “is to me an awful thing—the one thing that seems in humanity like the onliness of God. Mine terrifies me sometimes—looking a stranger to me—a limiting of myself—a breaking in upon my existence—like a volcanic outburst into the blue Sicilian air. When it thus manifests itself, I find no refuge but the offering of it back to him who thought it worth making. I say to him, ‘Lord, it is thine, not mine; see to it, Lord. Thou and thy eternity are mine, Father of Jesus Christ.’”

He covered his eyes with his hands, and his lips grew white and trembled. Thought had turned into prayer, and both were silent for a space. Rachel was the first to speak.

“I think I understand, uncle,” she said. “I don’t mind being God’s dwarf. But I would rather be made after his own image: this can’t be it. I should like to be made over again.”

“And if the hope we are saved by be no mockery, if St. Paul was not the fool of his own radiant imaginings, you will be, my child. But now let us forget our miserable bodies. Come up to my room, and I will read you a few lines that came to me this morning in the park.”

“Won’t you wait for Mr. Wingfold, uncle? He will

be here yet, I think. It can't be ten o'clock yet. He always looks in on Saturdays as he goes home from his walk. I should like you to read them to him too. They will do him good, I know."

"I would, my dear, willingly, if I thought he would care for them. But I don't think he would. They are not good enough verses. He has been brought up on Horace, and I fear counts the best poetry the neatest."

"I think you must be mistaken there, uncle; I have heard him talk delightfully about poetry."

"You must excuse me if I am shy of reading my poor work to any but yourself, Rachel. My heart was so much in it, and the subject is so sacred—"

"I am sorry you should think your pearls too good to cast before Mr. Wingfold, uncle," said Rachel, with a touch of disappointed temper.

"Nay, nay, child!" returned Polwarth, "that was not a good thing to say. What gives me concern is that there is so much of the rough dirty shell sticking about them, that to show them would be to wrong the truth in them."

Rachel seldom took long to repent. She came slowly to her uncle, where he stood with the lamp in his hand, looking in his face with a heavenly contrition, and saying nothing. When she reached him, she dropped on her knees and kissed the hand that hung by his side. Her temper was poor Rachel's one sore-felt trouble.

Polwarth stooped and kissed her on the forehead, raised her, and leading her to the stair, stood aside to

let her go first. But when she had been naughty Rachel would never go before her uncle, and she drew back. With a smile of intelligence he yielded and led the way. But ere they had climbed to the top, Rachel heard Mr. Wingfold's step, and went down again to receive him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A DREAM.



INVITED to ascend, Wingfold followed Rachel to her uncle's room, and there, whether guided by her or not, the conversation presently took such a turn that at length, of his own motion, Polwarth offered to read his verses. From the drawer of his table he took a scratched and scored half-sheet, and—not in the most melodious of voices, yet in one whose harshness and weakness could not cover a certain refinement of spiritual tenderness—read as follows :

Lord, hear my discontent : All blank I stand,
A mirror polished by thy hand ;
Thy sun's beams flash and flame from me—
I can not help it : here I stand, there he ;
To one of them I can not say,
Go, and on yonder water play.
Nor one poor ragged daisy can I fashion—
I do not make the words of this my limping passion.

If I should say, Now I will think a thought,
Lo! I must wait, unknowing,
What thought in me is growing,
Until the thing to birth is brought;
Nor know I then what next will come
From out the gulf of silence dumb.
I am the door the thing did find
To pass into the general mind;
I can not say I think—
I only stand upon the thought-well's brink;
From darkness to the sun the water bubbles up—
I lift it in my cup.
Thou only thinkest—I am thought;
Me and my thought thou thinkest. Nought
Am I but as a fountain spout
From which thy water welleteth out.
Thou art the only One, the All in all.
—Yet when my soul on thee doth call
And thou dost answer out of everywhere,
In thy allness have my perfect share.

While he read Rachel crept to his knee, knelt down,
and laid her head upon it.

If we are but the creatures of a day, yet surely were
the shadow-joys of this miserable pair not merely no-
ble in their essence, but finer to the soul's palate than
the shadow-joys of young Hercules Bascombe—Helen
and horses and all! Poor Helen I can not use for
comparison, for she had no joy, save, indeed, the very
divine, though at present unblossoming, one of sisterly
love. Still, and notwithstanding, if the facts of life are

those of George Bascombe's indorsing—and *he can prove it*, let us by all means learn and accept them, be they the worst possible. Meantime there are truths that ought to be facts, and until he has proved that there is no God, some of us will go feeling after him if haply we may find him, and in him the truths we long to find true. Some of us perhaps think we have seen him from afar, but we only know the better that in the mood wherein such as Bascombe are they will never find him—which would no doubt be to them a comfort were it not for a laughter. And if he be such as their idea of what we think him, they *are* better without him. If on the contrary he be what some of us really think him, their not seeking him will not perhaps prevent him from finding them.

From likeness of nature, community of feeling, constant intercourse, and perfect confidence, Rachel understood her uncle's verses with sufficient ease to enjoy them at once in part, and, for the rest, to go on thinking in the direction in which they would carry her; but Wingfold, in whom honesty of disposition had blossomed at last into honesty of will and action, after fitting pause, during which no word was spoken, said,

“Mr. Polwarth, where verse is concerned I am simply stupid: when read, I can not follow it. I did not understand the half of that poem. I never have been a student of English verse, and indeed that part of my nature which has to do with poetry has been a good deal neglected. Will you let me take those verses home with me?”

"I can not do that, for they are not legible; but I will copy them out for you."

"Will you give me them to-morrow? Shall you be at church?"

"That shall be just as you please: would you rather have me there or not?"

"A thousand times rather," answered the curate. "To have one man there who knows what I mean better than I can say it, is to have a double soul and double courage.—But I came to-night mainly to tell you that I have been much puzzled this last week to know how I ought to regard the Bible—I mean as to its inspiration. What am I to say about it?"

"Those are two distinct things. Why think of saying about it before you have any thing to say? For yourself, however, let me ask if you have not already found in the book the highest means of spiritual education and development you have yet met with? If so, may not that suffice for the present? It is the man Christ Jesus we have to know, and the Bible we have to use to that end—not for theory or dogma.—I will tell you a strange dream I had once, not long ago."

Rachel's face brightened. She rose, got a little stool, and setting it down close by the chair on which her uncle was perched, seated herself at his feet, with her eyes on the ground, to listen.

"About two years ago," said Polwarth, "a friend sent me Tauchnitz's edition of the English New Testament, which has the different readings of the three oldest known manuscripts translated at the foot of the page.

The edition was prepared chiefly for the sake of showing the results of the collation of the Sinaitic manuscript, the oldest of all, so named because it was found—a few years ago, by Tischendorf—in a monastery on Mount Sinai—nowhere else than there! I received it with such exultation as brought on an attack of asthma, and I could scarce open it for a week, but lay with it under my pillow. When I did come to look at it, my main wonder was to find the differences from the common version so few and small. Still there were some such as gave rise to a feeling far above mere interest—one in particular, the absence of a word that had troubled me, not seeming like a word of our Lord, or consonant with his teaching. I am unaware whether the passage has ever given rise to controversy.”

“May I ask what word it was?” interrupted Wingfold eagerly.

“I will not say,” returned Polwarth. “Not having troubled you, you would probably only wonder why it should have troubled me. For my purpose in mentioning the matter, it is enough to say that I had turned with eagerness to the passage wherein it occurs, as given in two of the gospels in our version. Judge my delight in discovering that in the one gospel the whole passage was omitted by the two oldest manuscripts, and in the other just the one word that had troubled me by the same two. I would not have you suppose me foolish enough to imagine that the oldest manuscript must be the most correct; but you will at once understand the sense of room and air which the discovery gave me notwithstanding,

and I mention it because it goes both to account for the dream that followed and to enforce its truth. Pray do not, however, imagine me a believer in dreams more than in any other source of mental impressions. If a dream reveal a principle, that principle is a revelation, and the dream is neither more *nor less* valuable than a waking thought that does the same. The truth conveyed is the revelation. I do not deny that facts have been learned in dreams, but I would never call the communication of a mere fact a revelation. Truth alone, beheld as such by the soul, is worthy of the name. Facts, however, may themselves be the instruments of such revelation.

“The dream I am now going to tell you was clearly enough led up to by my waking thoughts. For I had been saying to myself ere I fell asleep, ‘On the very Mount Sinai that once burned with heavenly fire and resounded with the thunder of a visible Presence, now old and cold, and swathed in the mists of legend and doubt, was discovered the most reverend, because most ancient, record of the new dispensation which dethroned that mountain and silenced the thunders of the pedagogue law! Is it not possible that yet, in some ancient convent, insignificant to the eye of the traveller as modern Nazareth would be but for its ancient story, some one of the original gospel-manuscripts may lie, truthful and unblotted from the hand of the very evangelist? O lovely parchment!’ I thought—‘if eye of man might but see thee! if lips of man might kiss thee!’ and my heart swelled like the heart of a lover at the

thought of such a boon. Now, as you know, I live in a sort of live coffin here," continued the little man, striking his pigeon-breast, "with a barrel-organ of discords in it, constantly out of order in one way or another; and hence it comes that my sleep is so imperfect, and my dreams run more than is usual, as I believe, on in the direction of my last waking thoughts. Well, that night, I dreamed thus: I was in a desert. It was neither day nor night to me. I saw neither sun, moon, nor stars. A heavy yet half-luminous cloud hung over the visible earth. My heart was beating fast and high, for I was journeying towards a certain Armenian convent, where I had good ground for hoping I should find the original manuscript of the fourth gospel, the very handwriting of the apostle John. That the old man did not write it himself, I never thought of that in my dream.

"After I had walked on for a long, any thing but weary time, I saw the level horizon line before me broken by a rock, as it seemed, rising from the plain of the desert. I knew it was the monastery. It was many miles away, and as I journeyed on, it grew and grew, until it swelled huge as a hill against the sky. At length I came up to the door, iron-clamped, deep-set in a low, thick wall. It stood wide open. I entered, crossed a court, reached the door of the monastery itself, and again entered. Every door to which I came stood open, but priest nor guide came to meet me, and I saw no man, and at length looked for none, but used my best judgment to get deeper and deeper into the building, for I scarce doubted that in its inmost penetralia I should find the treasure I

sought. At last I stood before a door hung with a curtain of rich workmanship, torn in the middle from top to bottom. Through the rent I passed into a stone cell. In the cell stood a table. On the table was a closed book. Oh! how my heart beat! Never but then have I known the feeling of utter preciousness in a thing possessed. What doubts and fears would not this one lovely, oh! unutterably beloved volume, lay at rest forever! How my eyes would dwell upon every stroke of every letter the hand of the dearest disciple had formed! Nearly eighteen hundred years—and there it lay!—and there *was* a man who *did* hear the Master say the words, and did set them down! I stood motionless, and my soul seemed to wind itself among the leaves, while my body stood like a pillar of salt, lost in its own gaze. At last, with sudden daring, I made a step towards the table, and, bending with awe, outstretched my hand to lay it upon the book. But ere my hand reached it, another hand, from the opposite side of the table, appeared upon it—an old, blue-veined, but powerful hand. I looked up. There stood the beloved disciple! His countenance was as a mirror from which shone back the face of the Master. Slowly he lifted the book, and turned away. Then first I saw behind him as it were an altar whereon a fire of wood was burning, and a pang of dismay shot to my heart, for I knew what he was about to do. He laid the book on the burning wood, and regarded it with a smile as it shrunk and shrivelled and smouldered to ashes. Then he turned to me and said, while a perfect heaven of peace shone in his eyes: ‘Son

of man, the Word of God liveth and abideth forever, not in the volume of the book, but in the heart of the man that in love obeyeth him.' And therewith I awoke weeping, but with the lesson of my dream."

A deep silence fell on the little company. Then said Wingfold,

"I trust I have the lesson too."

He rose, shook hands with them, and, without another word, went home.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANOTHER SERMON.

IT often seems to those in earnest about the right as if all things conspired to prevent their progress. This, of course, is but an appearance, arising in part from this, that the pilgrim must be headed back from the side-paths into which he is constantly wandering. To Wingfold, however, it seemed that all things fell in to further his quest, which will not be so surprising if we remember that his was no intermittent repentant seeking, but the struggle of his whole energy. And there are those who in their very first seeking of it are nearer to the kingdom of heaven than many who have for years believed themselves of it. In the former there is more of the mind of Jesus, and when he calls them, they recognise him at once and go after him; while the others examine him from head to foot, and finding him not sufficiently like the Jesus of their conception, turn their backs, and go to church or chapel or chamber to kneel before a vague form mingled of

tradition and fancy. But the first shall be last and the last first, and there are from whom, be it penny or be it pound, what they have must be taken away because with them it lies useless.

For Wingfold, he soon found that his nature was being stirred to depths unsuspected before. Hitherto nothing had ever roused him to genuine activity: his history was not very happy, his life not very interesting, his work not congenial, and paying itself in no satisfaction, his pleasures of a cold and common intellectual sort, he had dragged along, sustained, without the sense of its sustentation, by the germ within him of a slowly-developing honesty. But now that Conscience had got up into the guard's seat, and Will had taken the reins, he found all his intellectual faculties in full play, keeping well together, heads up and traces tight, while the outrider Imagination, with his spotted dog Fancy, was always far ahead, but never beyond the sound of the guard's horn; and ever as they went, object after object hitherto beyond the radius of his interest rose on the horizon of question, and began to glimmer in the dawn of human relation.

His first sermon is enough to show that he had begun to have thoughts of his own—a very different thing from the entertaining of the thoughts of others, however well we may feed and lodge them—thoughts which came to him not as things which sought an entrance, but as things that sought an exit—cried for forms of embodiment that they might pass out of the infinite, and by incarnation become communicable.

The news of that strange first sermon had of course spread through the town, and the people came to church the next Sunday in crowds—twice as many as the usual assembly—some who went seldom, some who went nowhere, some who belonged to other congregations and communities—mostly bent on witnessing whatever eccentricity the very peculiar young man might be guilty of next, but having a few among them who were sympathetically interested in seeing how far his call, if call it was, would lead him.

His second sermon was to the same purport as the first. Proposing no text, he spoke to the following effect, and indeed the following are of the very words he uttered :

“The church wherein you now listen, my hearers, the pulpit wherein I now speak, stand here from of old in the name of Christianity. What is Christianity? I know but one definition, the analysis of which, if the thing in question be a truth, must be the joyous labor of every devout heart to all eternity. For Christianity does not mean what you think or what I think concerning Christ, but what *is* of Christ. My Christianity, if ever I come to have any, will be what of Christ is in me; your Christianity now is what of Christ is in you. Last Sunday I showed you our Lord’s very words—that he, and no other, was his disciple who did what he told him—and said, therefore, that I dared not call myself a disciple. I say the same thing in saying now that I dare not call myself a Christian, lest I should offend him with my ‘Lord, Lord!’ Still it is, and I can not now help

it, in the name of Christianity that I here stand. I have—alas! with blameful and appalling thoughtlessness!—subscribed my name, as a believer, to the articles of the Church of England, with no better reason than that I was unaware of any dissent therefrom, and have been ordained one of her ministers. The relations into which this has brought me I do not feel justified in severing at once, lest I should therein seem to deny that which its own illumination may yet show me to be true, and I desire therefore a little respite and room for thought and resolve. But meantime it remains my business, as an honest man in the employment of the church, to do my best towards the setting forth of the claims of him upon whom that church is founded, and in whose name she exists. As one standing on the outskirts of a listening Galilean crowd, a word comes now and then to my hungry ears and hungrier heart: I turn and tell it again to you—not that ye have not heard it also, but that I may stir you up to ask yourselves: ‘Do I then obey this word? Have I ever, have I once, sought to obey it? Am I a pupil of Jesus? Am I a Christian?’ Hear then of his words. For me, they fill my heart with doubt and dismay.

“The Lord says, *Love your enemies*. Sayest thou, *It is impossible?* Then dost thou mock the word of him who said, *I am the Truth*, and hast no part in him. Sayest thou, *Alas! I can not?* Thou sayest true, I doubt not. But hast thou tried whether he who made will not increase the strength put forth to obey him?

“The Lord says, *Be ye perfect*. Dost thou then aim

after perfection, or dost thou excuse thy willful shortcomings, and say *To err is human*—nor hopest that it may also be found human to grow divine? Then ask thyself, for thou hast good cause, whether thou hast any part in him.

“The Lord said, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.* My part is not now to preach against the love of money, but to ask you, *Are you laying up for yourselves treasures on earth?* As to what the command means, the honest heart and the dishonest must each settle it in his own way; but if your heart condemn you, what I have to say is, Call not yourselves Christians, but consider whether you ought not to become disciples indeed. No doubt you can instance this, that, and the other man who does as you do, and of whom yet no man dreams of questioning the Christianity: it matters not a hair; all that goes but to say that you are pagans together. Do not mistake me: I judge you not. But I ask you, as mouthpiece most unworthy of that Christianity in the name of which this building stands and we are met therein, to judge your own selves by the words of its founder.

“The Lord said. *Take no thought for your life. Take no thought for the morrow.* Explain it as you may or can; but ask yourselves, Do I take no thought for my life? Do I take no thought for the morrow? and answer to yourselves whether or no ye are Christians.

“The Lord says, *Judge not.* Didst thou judge thy neighbor yesterday? Wilt thou judge him again tomorrow? Art thou judging him now in the very heart

that within thy bosom sits hearing the words *Judge not?*
Or wilt thou ask yet again, Who is my neighbor?
How then canst thou look to be of those that shall enter through the gates into the city? I tell thee not, for I profess not yet to know any thing, but doth not thine own profession of Christianity counsel thee to fall upon thy face, and cry to him whom thou mockest, 'I am a sinful man, O Lord'?

"The Lord said, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* Ye that buy and sell, do you obey this law? Examine yourselves and see. Ye would that men should deal fairly by you: do you deal fairly by them as ye would count fairness in them to you? If conscience makes you hang the head inwardly, however you sit with it erect in the pew, dare you add to your crime against the law and the prophets the insult to Christ of calling yourselves his disciples?

"*Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* He will none but those who with him do the will of the Father."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NURSING.



HAVE of course given but the spine and ribs, as it were, of the sermon. There is no place for more. It is enough, however, to show that he came to the point—and what can be better in preaching? Certainly he was making the best of the blunder that had led him up into that pulpit! And on the other hand, whatever might be the various judgments and opinions of his hearers in respect of the sermon—a thing about which the less any preacher allows himself to think the better—many of them did actually feel that he had been preaching to them, which is saying much. Even Mrs. Ramshorn was more silent than usual as they went home, and although—not having acquainted herself, amongst others, with the sermons of Latimer—she was profoundly convinced that such preaching was altogether contrary to the tradition, usage, and tone of the English Church, of which her departed dean remained to her the unimpeachable embodiment and type, the sole remark she made was that Mr. Wingfold took quite

too much pains to prove himself a pagan. Mr. Bascombe was in the same mind as before.

"I like the fellow," he said. "He says what he means, fair and full, and no shilly-shallying. It's all great rubbish, of course!"

And the widow of the dean of blessed memory had not a word to say in defense of the sermon, but, for her, let it go as the great rubbish he called it. Indeed, not knowing the real mind of her nephew, she was nothing less than gratified to hear from him an opinion so comfortably hostile to that of this most uncomfortable of curates, whom you never could tell where to have, and whom never since he had confessed to wrong in the reading of his uncle's sermons, and thus unwittingly cast a reproach upon the memory of him who had departed from the harassed company of deans militant to the blessed company of deans triumphant, had she invited to share at her table of the good things left behind.

"Why don't you ask him home to dinner, aunt?" said Bascombe, after a pause unbroken by Mrs. Rams-horn.

"Why should I, George?" returned his aunt. "Has he not been abusing us all at a most ignorant and furious rate?"

"Oh! I didn't know," said the nephew, and held his peace. Nor did the aunt perceive the sarcasm for the sake of pointing which he was silent. But it was not lost, and George was paid in full by the flicker of a faint smile across Helen's face.

As for Helen, the sermon had indeed laid a sort of

feebly electrical hold upon her, the mere nervous influence of honesty and earnestness. But she could not accuse herself of having ever made a prominent profession of Christianity, confirmation and communion notwithstanding ; and besides, had she not now all but abjured the whole thing in her heart ? so that if every word of what he said was true, not a word of it could be applied to her ! and what time had she to think about such far-away things as had happened eighteen centuries ago, when there was her one darling pining away with a black weight on his heart !

For, although Leopold was gradually recovering, a supreme dejection, for which his weakness was insufficient to account, prostrated his spirit, and at length drove Mr. Faber to ask Helen whether she knew of any disappointment or other source of mental suffering that could explain it. She told him of the habit he had formed, and asked whether his being deprived of the narcotic might not be the cause. He accepted the suggestion, and set himself, not without some success ; to repair the injury the abuse had occasioned. Still, although his physical condition plainly improved, the dejection continued, and Mr. Faber was thrown back upon his former conjecture. Learning nothing, however, and yet finding that, as he advanced towards health, his dejection plainly deepened, he began at length to fear softening of the brain, but could discover no other symptom of such disease.

The earnestness of the doctor's quest after a cause for what any one might observe added greatly to Hel-

en's uneasiness ; and besides, the fact itself began to undermine the hope of his innocence which had again sprung up and almost grown to assurance in the absence of any fresh contradiction from without. Also, as his health returned, his sleep became more troubled ; he dreamed more, and showed by his increased agitation in his dreams that they were more painful. In this respect his condition was at the worst always between two and three o'clock in the morning ; and having perceived this fact, Helen would never allow any one to sit up with him the first part of the night except herself.

Increased anxiety and continued watching soon told upon her health yet more severely, and she lost appetite and complexion. Still she slept well during the latter part of the morning, and was always down before her aunt had finished breakfast ; and it was in vain that aunt and doctor and nurse all expostulated with her upon the excess of her ministrations : nothing should make her yield her post until her brother was himself again. Nor was she without her reward, and that a sufficing one—in the love and gratitude with which Leopold clung to her.

During the day, also, she spent every moment, except such as she passed in the open air and at table with her aunt, by his bedside, reading and talking to him ; but yet not a single allusion had been made to the frightful secret.

At length he was so much better that there was no longer need for any one to sit up with him ; but then

Helen had her bed put in the dressing-room that at one o'clock she might be by his side, to sit there until three should be well over and gone.

Thus she gave up her whole life to him, and doubtless thereby gained much fresh interest in it for herself. But the weight of the secret and the dread of the law were too much for her, and were gradually undermining that strength of dissimulation in which she had trusted, and which, in respect of cheerfulness, she had to exercise towards her brother as well as her aunt. She struggled hard, for if those weak, despairing eyes of his were to encounter weakness and despair in hers, madness itself would be at the door for both. She had come nearly to the point of discovering that the soul is not capable of generating its own requirements, that it needs to be supplied from a well whose springs lie deeper than its own soil, in the infinite All, namely, upon which that soil rests. Happy they who have found that those springs have an outlet in their hearts—on the hill of prayer.

It was very difficult to lay her hands on reading that suited him. Gifted with a glowing yet delicate eastern imagination, pampered and all but ruined, he was impatient of narratives of common life, whose current bore him to a reservoir and no sea; while, on the other hand, some tales that seemed to Helen poverty-stricken flats of nonsense, or jumbles of false invention, would in her brother wake an interest she could not understand, appearing to afford him outlooks into regions to her unknown. But from the moral element in any

story he shrank visibly. She tried the German tales collected by the brothers Grimm, so popular with children of all ages ; but on the very first attempt she blundered into an awful one of murder and vengeance, in which, if the drawing was untrue, the color was strong, and had to blunder clumsily out of it again, with a hot face and a cold heart. At length she betook herself to the *Thousand and One Nights*, which she had never read, and found very dull, but which with Leopold served for what book could do.

In the rest of the house things went on much the same. Old friends and their daughters called on Mrs. Ramshorn and inquired after the invalid, and George Bascombe came almost every Saturday, and stayed till Monday. But the moment the tide of her trouble began again to rise, Helen found herself less desirous of meeting one from whom she could hope neither help nor cheer. It might be that future generations of the death-doomed might pass their poor life a little more comfortably that she had not been a bad woman, and she might be privileged to pass away from the world, as George taught her, without earning the curses of those that came after her ; but there was her precious brother lying before her with a horrible worm gnawing at his heart, and what to her were a thousand generations unborn ! Rather with Macbeth she might well " wish the estate o' the world were now undone"—most of all when, in the silent watches of the night, as she sat by the bedside of her beloved and he slept, his voice would

come murmuring out of a dream, sounding so far away that it seemed as if his spirit only and not his lips had spoken the words, "O Helen! darling, give me my knife. Why will you not let me die?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GLASTON AND THE CURATE.



OUTSIDE, the sun rose and set, never a crimson thread the less in the garment of his glory that the spirit of one of the children of the earth was stained with blood-guiltiness; the moon came up and knew nothing of the matter; the stars minded their own business; and the people of Glaston were talking about their curate's sermons. Alas! it was about his sermons and not the subject of them that men talked, their interest mainly roused by their *peculiarity*, and what some called the oddity of the preacher.

What had come to him? He was not in the least like that for months after his appointment, and the change came all at once! Yes, it began with those extravagant notions about honesty in writing his own sermons! It might have been a sunstroke, but it took him far too early in the year for that! Softening of the brain it might be, poor fellow! Was not excessive vanity sometimes a symptom? Poor fellow!

So said some. But others said he was a clever fellow, and long-headed enough to know that that sort of thing attracted attention, and might open the way to a benefice, or at least an engagement in London, where eloquence was of more account than in a dead-and-alive country place like Glaston, from which the tide of grace had ebbed, leaving that great ship of the church, the Abbey, high and dry on the shore.

Others again judged him a fanatic—a dangerous man. Such did not all venture to assert that he had erred from the way, but what man was more dangerous than he who went too far? Possibly these forgot that the narrow way can hardly be one to sit down in comfortably, or indeed to be entered at all save by him who tries the gate with the intent of going all the way—even should it lead up to the perfection of the Father in heaven. “But,” they would in effect have argued, “is not a fanatic dangerous? and is not an enthusiast always in peril of becoming a fanatic? Be his enthusiasm for what it may—for Jesus Christ, for God himself—such a man is dangerous, most dangerous! There are so many things comfortably settled, like Presumption’s tubs, upon their own bottoms, which such men would, if they could, at once upset and empty!”

Others suspected a Romanizing drift in the whole affair. “Wait until he gathers influence,” they said, “and a handful of followers, and then you’ll see! They’ll be all back to Rome together in a month!”

As the wind took by the tail St. Peter’s cock on the church-spire and whirled it about, so did the wind of

words in Glaston rudely seize and flack hither and thither the spiritual reputation of Thomas Wingfold, curate. And all the time the young man was wrestling, his life in his hand, with his own unbelief ; while upon his horizon ever and anon rose the glimmer of a great aurora or the glimpse of a boundless main—if only he could have been sure they were no mirage of his own parched heart and hungry eye ; that they were thoughts in the mind of the Eternal, and *therefore* had appeared in his, even as the Word was said to have become flesh and dwelt with men ! The next moment he would be gasping in that malarious exhalation from the marshes of his neglected heart—the counter-fear, namely, that the word under whose potent radiance the world seemed on the verge of budding forth and blossoming as the rose was *too good to be true*.

“ Yes, much too good, if there be no living, self-willing God,” said Polwarth one evening, in answer to the phrase just dropped from his lips. “ But if there be such a God as alone could be God, can any thing be too good to be true—too good for such a God as contented Jesus Christ ? ”

At one moment he was ready to believe every thing, even to that strangest, yet to me right credible, miracle of the fish and the piece of money, and the next to doubt whether man had ever dared utter the words, “ I and the Father are one.” Tossed he was and tormented in spirit, calling even aloud sometimes to know if there was a God anywhere hearing his prayer, sure only of this, that whatever else any being might be, if he heard

not prayer, he could not be the God for whom his soul cried and fainted. Sometimes there came to him, it is true, what he would gladly have taken for an answer, but it was nothing more than a sudden descent of a kind of calmness on his spirit, which, for aught he could tell, might be but the calm of exhaustion. His knees were sore with kneeling, his face white with thinking, his eye dim with trouble ; for when once a man has set out to find God, he must find him or die. This was the inside reality whose outcome set the public of Glaston babbling. It was from this that George Bascombe magisterially pronounced him a hypochondriac, worrying his brain about things that had no existence—as George himself could with confidence testify, not once having seen the sight of them, heard the sound of them, or imagined in his heart that they ought to be, or even that they might possibly be. He pronounced, indeed, their existence inconsistent with his own. The thought had never rippled the gray mass of his self-satisfied brain that perhaps there was more of himself than what he counted himself yet knew, and that possibly these matters had a consistent relation with parts unknown. Poor, poverty-stricken Wingfold ! actually craving for things beneath Bascombe's notice ! actually crying for something higher and brighter than the moon ! How independent was George compared with Thomas ! content to live what he called his life, be a benefactor to men, chiefly in ridding their fancies of the goblins of aspiration, then die his death, and have done with the business ; while poor, misguided, weak-brained, hypochon-

driacal Thomas could be contented with nothing less than the fulfillment of the promise of a certain man who perhaps never existed: "The Father and I will come to him and make our abode with him."

Yet Thomas, too, had his weakness for the testimony of the senses. If he did not, like George, refuse to believe without it, he yet could not help desiring signs and wonders that he might believe. Of this the following poem was a result, and I give it the more willingly because it will show how the intellectual nature of the man had advanced, borne on the waves that burst from the fountains of the great deep below it:

O Lord ! if on the wind, at cool of day,
I heard one whispered word of mighty grace ;
If through the darkness, as in bed I lay,
But once had come a hand upon my face ;

If but one sign that might not be mistook,
Had ever been, since first thy face I sought,
I should not now be doubting o'er a book,
But serving thee with burning heart and thought.

So dreams that heart. But to my heart I say,
Turning my face to front the dark and wind :
Such signs had only barred anew His way
Into thee, longing heart, thee, wildered mind.

They asked the very Way, where lies the way ;
The very Son, where is the Father's face ;
How he could show himself, if not in clay,
Who was the Lord of spirit, form, and space ?

My being, Lord, will nevermore be whole
Until thou come behind mine ears and eyes,
Enter and fill the temple of my soul
With perfect contact—such a sweet surprise—

Such presence as, before it met the view,
The prophet-fancy could not once foresee,
Though every corner of the temple knew
By very emptiness its need of thee.

When I keep *all* thy words, no favored some—
Heedless of wordly winds or judgment's tide,
Then, Jesus, thou wilt with thy Father come—
O ended prayers!—and in my soul abide.

Ah! long delay! ah! cunning, creeping sin!
I shall but fail and cease at length to try:
O Jesus! though thou wilt not yet come in,
Knock at my window as thou passest by.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LINEN-DRAPER.

BUT there was yet another class among those who on that second day heard the curate testify what honestly he might, and no more, concerning Jesus of Nazareth. So far as he learned, however, that class consisted of one individual.

On the following Tuesday morning he went into the shop of the chief linen-drapeer of Glaston, for he was going to a funeral, and wanted a new pair of gloves that he might decline those which would be offered to him. A young woman waited on him, but Mr. Drew, seeing him from the other end of the shop, came and took her place. When he was fitted, had paid for his purchase and was turning to take his leave, the drapeer, with what appeared a resolution suddenly forced from hesitation, leaned over the counter and said,

“Would you mind walking up stairs for a few minutes, sir? I ask it as a great favor. I want very much to speak to you.”

“I shall be most happy,” answered Wingfold—conventionally, it must be allowed, for in reality he antici-

pated expostulation, and having in his public ministrations to do his duty against his own grain, he had no fancy for encountering other people's grain as well in private. Mr. Drew opened certain straits in the counter, and the curate followed him through them, then through a door, up a stair, and into a comfortable dining-room, which smelt strongly of tobacco. There Mr. Drew placed for him a chair, and seated himself in front of him.

The linen-draper was a middle-aged, middle-sized, stoutish man, with plump, rosy cheeks, keen black eyes, and features of the not uncommon pug-type, ennobled and harmonized by a genuine expression of kindly good-humor, and an excellent forehead. His dark hair was a little streaked with gray. His manner, which in the shop had been of the shop—that is, more deferential and would-be pleasing than Wingfold liked—settled, as he took his seat, into one more resembling that of a country gentleman. It was courteous and friendly, but clouded with a little anxiety.

An uncomfortable pause following, Wingfold stumbled in with the question, "I hope Mrs. Drew is well," without reflecting whether he had really ever heard of a Mrs. Drew.

The draper's face flushed.

"It's twenty years since I lost her, sir," he returned. In his tone and manner there was something peculiar.

"I beg your pardon," said Wingfold, with self-accusing sincerity.

"I will be open with you sir," continued his host;

“she left me—with another—nearly twenty years ago.”

“I am ashamed of my inadvertence,” rejoined Wingfold. “I have been such a short time here, and—”

“Do not mention it, sir. How could you help it? Besides, it was not here the thing took place, but a hundred miles away. I hope I should before long have referred to the fact myself. But now I desire, if you will allow me, to speak of something different.”

“I am at your service,” answered Wingfold.

“Thank you, sir. I was in your church last Sunday,” resumed the draper, after a pause. “I am not one of your regular hearers, sir; but your sermon that day set me thinking, and instead of thinking less when Monday came, I have been thinking more and more ever since; and when I saw you in the shop, I could not resist the sudden desire to speak to you. If you have time, sir, I hope you will allow me to come to the point my own way?”

Wingfold assured him that his time was at his own disposal, and could not be better occupied. Mr. Drew thanked him, and went on.

“Your sermon, I must confess, sir, made me uncomfortable—no fault of yours, sir; all my own; though how much the fault is I hardly know: use and custom are hard upon a man, sir, and you would have a man go by other laws than those of the world he lives in. ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,’ you will doubtless say. That is over the Royal Exchange in London, I think; but it is not the laws of the Lord that are specially followed inside, for all that. However, it

is not with other people we have to do, but with ourselves—as you will say. Well, then, it is for myself I am troubled now. Mr. Wingfold, sir, I am not altogether at ease in my own mind as to the way I have made my money—what little money I have—no great sum, but enough to retire upon when I please. I would not have you think me worse than I am, but I am sincerely desirous of knowing what you would have me do.”

“My dear sir,” returned Wingfold, “I am the very last to look to for enlightenment. I am as ignorant of business as any child. I am not aware that I ever bought any thing except books and clothes, or ever sold any thing except a knife to a schoolfellow—I had bought it the day before for half a crown, but there was a spot of rust on one of the blades, and therefore I parted with it for twopence. The only thing I can say is, if you have been in the way of doing any thing you are no longer satisfied with, don’t do it any more.”

“But just there comes my need of help. You must do something with your business, and *don't do it* don’t tell me what to do. Mind, I do not confess to having done any thing the trade would count inadmissible, or which is not done in the largest establishments. What I now make question of I learned in one of the most respectable of London houses.”

“You imply that a man in your line who would not do certain things the doing of which has contributed to the making of your fortune, would by the ordinary dealer be regarded as Quixotic?”

“He would; but that there may be such men I am

bound to allow, for here am I wishing with all my heart that I had never done them. Right gladly would I give up the money I have made by them to be rid of them. I am unhappy about it. But I should never have dared to confess it to you, sir, or, I believe, to any one, but for the confession you made in the pulpit some time ago. I was not there, but I heard of it. I foolishly judged you unwise to accuse yourself before an unsympathizing public—but here I am in consequence accusing myself to you !”

“To no unsympathizing hearer, though,” said the curate.

“It made me want to go and hear you preach,” pursued the draper ; “for no one could say but it was plucky—and we all like pluck, sir,” he added, with a laugh that puckered his face, showed the whitest of teeth, and swept every sign of trouble from the half-globe of his radiant countenance.

“Then you know sum and substance of what I can do for you, Mr. Drew : I can sympathize with you ; not a whit more or less am I capable of. I am the merest beginner and dabbler in doing right myself, and have more need to ask you to teach me than to set up for teaching you.”

“That’s the beauty of you !—excuse me, sir,” cried the draper triumphantly. “You don’t pretend to teach us any thing, but you make us so uncomfortable that we go about ever after asking ourselves what we ought to do. Till last Sunday I had always looked upon myself as an honest man ; let me see, it would be more cor-

rect to say I looked on myself as a man *quite honest enough*. That I do not feel so now is your doing, sir. You said in your sermon last Sunday, and specially to business men, 'Do you do to your neighbor as you would have your neighbor do to you? If not, how can you suppose that the Lord of Christians will acknowledge you as a disciple of his, that is, as a Christian?' Now, I was even surer of being a Christian than of being an honest man. You will hardly believe it, and what to think of it myself I hardly know, but I had satisfied myself, more or less, that I had gone through all the necessary stages of being born again, and it is now many years since I was received into a Christian church—dissenting, of course, I mean; for what I count the most important difference after all between church and dissent is that the one, right or wrong, requires for communion a personal profession of faith and credible proof of conversion—which I believed I gave them, and have been for years, I shame to say it, one of the deacons of that community. But it shall not be for long. To return to my story, however: I was indignant at being called upon from a church-pulpit to raise in myself the question whether or not I was a Christian; for had not I put my faith in the ——? But I will avoid theology, for I have paid more regard to that than has proved good for me. Suffice it to say that I was now driven from the tests of the theologians to try myself by the words of the Master—he must be the best theologian after all, mustn't he, sir?—and so there and then I tried the test of doing to your neighbor *as*. But I could

not get it to work ; I could not see how to use it, and while I was trying how to make it apply you were gone, and I lost all the rest of the sermon.

“ Now, whether it was any thing you had said coming back to me I can not tell, but next day, that was yesterday, all at once, in the shop here, as I was serving Mrs. Ramshorn, the thought came to me, How would Jesus Christ have done if he had been a draper instead of a carpenter ? When she was gone, I went up to my room to think about it. And there it seemed that first I must know how he did as a carpenter. But that we are told nothing about. I could get no light upon that. And so my thoughts turned again to the original question, How would he have done had he been a draper ? And, strange to say, I seemed to know far more about that than the other, and to have something to go upon. In fact, I had a sharp and decisive answer concerning several things of which I had dared to make a question.”

“ The vision of the ideal woke the ideal in yourself,” said Wingfold thoughtfully.

“ I don't know that I quite understand that,” returned Mr. Drew ; “ but the more I thought the more dissatisfied I became. And, in a word, it has come to this, that I must set things right or give up business.”

“ That would be no victory,” remarked the curate.

“ I know it, and shall not yield without a struggle, I promise you. That same afternoon, taking the opportunity of having overheard one of them endeavoring to persuade an old farmer's wife to her disadvantage, I called all my people, and told them that if ever I heard

one of them do such a thing, I would turn him or her away at once. But when I came to look at it, I saw how difficult it would be to convict of the breach of such a vague law; and unfortunately, too, I had some time ago introduced the system of a small percentage to the sellers, making it their interest to force sales. That, however, is easily rectified, and I shall see to it at once. But I do wish I had a more definite law to follow than that of doing *as!*"

"Would not more light inside do as well as clearer law outside?" suggested Wingfold.

"How can I tell till I have had a chance of trying?" returned the draper with a smile, which speedily vanished as he went on: "Then, again, there's all about profits! How much ought I to take? Am I to do as others do, and always be ruled by the market? Am I bound to give my customers the advantage of any special bargain I may have made? And then again—for I do a large wholesale business with the little country shops—if I learn that one of my customers is going down-hill, have I or have I not a right to pounce upon him and make him pay me, to the detriment of his other creditors? There's no end of questions, you see, sir."

"I am the worst possible man to ask," returned Wingfold, again. "I might, from very ignorance, judge that wrong which is really right, or that right which is really wrong. But one thing I begin to see, that before a man can do right by his neighbor, he must love him as himself. Only I am such a poor scholar in these high things that, as you have just said, I can not pretend to

teach any body. That sermon was but an appeal to men's own consciences whether they kept the words of the Lord by whose name they called themselves. Except in your case, Mr. Drew, I am not aware that one of the congregation has taken it to heart."

"I am not sure of that," returned the draper. "Some talk among my own people has made me fancy that, perhaps, though talk be but froth, the froth may rise from some hot work down below. Never man could tell from the quiet way I am talking to you how much I have felt in these few days past."

Wingfold looked him in the face: the earnestness of the man was plain in his eyes, and his resolve stamped on every feature. The curate thought of Zacchæus; thought of Matthew at the receipt of custom; thought with some shame of certain judgments concerning trade, and shopkeepers especially, that seemed somehow to have bred in him like creeping things; for whence they had come he could not tell.

Now it was clear as day that—always provided the man Christ Jesus can be and is with his disciples always to the end of the world—a tradesman might just as soon have Jesus behind the counter with him, teaching him to buy and sell *in his name*, that is, as he would have done it as an earl riding over his lands might have him with him, teaching him how to treat his farmers and cottagers—all depending on how the one did his trading and the other his earling. A mere truism, is it? Yes, it is, and more is the pity; for what is a truism, as most men count truisms? What is it but a truth that ought to

have been buried long ago in the lives of men—to send up forever the corn of true deeds and the wine of loving-kindness—but, instead of being buried in friendly soil, is allowed to lie about, kicked hither and thither in the dry and empty garret of their brains, till they are sick of the sight and sound of it, and, to be rid of the thought of it, declare it to be no living truth but only a lifeless truism ! Yet in their brain that truism must rattle until they shift it to its rightful quarters in their heart, where it will rattle no longer but take root and be a strength and loveliness. Is a truth to cease to be uttered because no better form than that of some divine truism—say of St. John Boanerges—can be found for it ? To the critic the truism is a sea-worn, foot-trodden pebble ; to the obedient scholar, a radiant topaz, which, as he polishes it with the dust of its use, may turn into a diamond.

“ Jesus buying and selling ! ” said Wingfold to himself. “ And why not ? Did Jesus make chairs and tables, or boats perhaps, which the people of Nazareth wanted, without any admixture of trade in the matter ? Was there no transaction ? No passing of money between hands ? Did they not pay his father for them ? Was his Father’s way of keeping things going in the world too vile for the hands of him whose being was delight in the will of that Father ? No ; there must be a way of handling money that is noble as the handling of the sword in the hands of the patriot. Neither the mean man who loves it nor the faithless man who despises

it knows how to handle it. The former is one who allows his dog to become a nuisance, the latter one who kicks him from his sight. The noble man is he who so truly does the work given him to do that the inherent nobility of that work is manifest. And the trader who trades nobly is nobler surely than the high-born who, if he carried the principles of his daily life into trade, would be as pitiful a sneak as any he that bows and scrapes falsely behind that altar of lies, his counter."— All flat truisms I know, but no longer such to Wingfold, to whom they now for the first time showed themselves truths.

He had taken a kindly leave of the draper, promising to call again soon, and had reached the room-door on his way out, when he turned suddenly and said,

"Did you think to try praying, Mr. Drew? Men whose minds, if I may venture to judge, seem to me, from their writings, of the very highest order, have really and positively believed that the loftiest activity of a man's being lay in prayer to the unknown Father of that being, and that light in the inward parts was the certain consequence; that, in very truth, not only did the prayer of the man find the ear of God, but the man himself found God himself. I have no right to an opinion, but I have a splendid hope that I shall one day find it true. The Lord said a man must go on praying and not lose heart."

With the words he walked out, and the deacon thought of his many prayers at prayer-meetings and fam-

ily worships. The words of a young man who seemed to have only just discovered that there was such a thing as prayer, who could not pretend to be sure about it, but hoped splendidly, made him ashamed of them all.

CHAPTER XL.

RACHEL.



WINGFOLD went straight to his friend Polwarth, and asked him if he would allow him to bring Mr. Drew some evening to tea.

“You mean the linen-draper?” asked Polwarth. “Certainly, if you wish it.”

“Some troubles are catching,” said the curate. “Drew has caught my disease.”

“I am delighted to hear it. It would be hard to catch a better, and it’s one a rich man, as they say he is, seldom does catch. But I always liked his round, good-humored, honest face. If I remember rightly, he had a sore trial in his wife. It is generally understood that she ran away with some fellow or other. But that was before he came to live in Glaston.—Would you mind looking in upon Rachel for a few minutes, sir? She is not so well to-day, and has not been out of her own room.”

“With all my heart,” answered Wingfold. “I am sorry to hear she is suffering.”

“She is always suffering more or less,” said the little man. “But she enjoys life, notwithstanding, as you may clearly see. It is to her only a mitigated good, and that, I trust, for the sake of an unmitigated one.—Come this way, sir.”

He led the curate to the room next his own.

It also was a humble little garret, but dainty with whiteness. One who did not thoroughly know her might have said it was like her life, colorless, but bright with innocence and peace. The walls were white; the boards of the uncarpeted floor were as white as scrubbing could make old deal; the curtains of windows and bed were whiteness itself; the coverlid was white; so was the face that looked smiling over the top of it from the one low white pillow. But although Wingfold knew that face so well, he was almost startled at the sight of it now: in the patience of its suffering it was positively lovely. All that was painful to see was hidden; the crooked little body lay at rest in the grave of the bedclothes; the soul rose from it, and looked, gracious with womanhood, in the eyes of the curate.

“I can not give you my hand,” she said, smiling, as he went softly towards her, feeling like Moses when he put off his shoes, “for I have such a pain in my arm, I can not well raise it.”

The curate bowed reverentially, seated himself in a chair by her bedside, and, like a true comforter, said nothing.

“Don’t be sorry for me, Mr. Wingfold,” said her sweet voice at length. “The poor dwarfie, as the chil-

dren call me, is not a creature to be pitied. You don't know how happy I am as I lie here, knowing my uncle is in the next room, and will come the moment I call him—and that there is one nearer still," she added in a lower voice, almost in a whisper, "whom I haven't even to call. I am his, and he shall do with me just as he likes. I fancy sometimes, when I have to lie still, that I am a little sheep, tied hands and feet—I should have said all four feet, if I am a sheep"—and here she gave a little merry laugh—"lying on an altar—the bed here—burning away in the flame of life that consumes the deathful body—burning, heart and soul and sense, up to the great Father.—Forgive me, Mr. Wingfold, for talking about myself, but you looked so miserable ! and I knew it was your kind heart feeling for me. But I need not, for that, have gone on at such a rate. I am ashamed of myself !"

"On the contrary, I am exceedingly obliged to you for honoring me by talking so freely," said Wingfold. "It is a great satisfaction to find that suffering is not necessarily unhappiness. I could be well content to suffer also, Miss Polwarth, if with the suffering I might have the same peace."

"Sometimes I am troubled," she answered ; "but generally I am in peace, and sometimes too happy to dare speak about it. Would the persons you and my uncle were talking about the other day—would they say all my pleasant as well as my painful thoughts came from the same cause—vibrations in my brain ?"

"No doubt. They would say, I presume, that the

pleasant thoughts come from regular, and the unpleasant from irregular, motions of its particles. They must give the same origin to both. Would you be willing to acknowledge that only your pleasant thoughts had a higher origin, and that your painful ones came from physical sources?"

Because of a headache and depression of spirits, Wingfold had been turning over similar questions in his own mind the night before.

"I see," said the dwarfie, "I see. No. There are sad thoughts sometimes which in their season I would not lose, for I would have their influences with me always. In their season they are better than a host of happy ones, and there is joy at the root of all. But if they did come from physical causes, would it follow that they did not come from God? Is he not the God of the dying as well as the God of the living?"

"If there be a God, Miss Polwarth," returned Wingfold eagerly, "then is he God everywhere, and not a maggot can die any more than a Shakespeare be born without him. He is either enough, that is, all in all, or he is not at all."

"That is what I think, because it is best. I can give no better reason."

"If there be a God, there can be no better reason," said Wingfold.

This *if* of Wingfold's was, I need hardly now say, an *if* of bare honesty, and came of no desire to shake an unthinking confidence. Neither, had it been of the other sort, could it have shaken Rachel's, for her confi-

dence was full of thinking. As little could it shock her, for she hardly missed a sentence that passed between her uncle and his new friend. She made no reply, never imagining it her business to combat the doubts of a man whom she knew to be eager after the truth, and being guiltless of any tendency, because she believed, to condemn doubt as wicked.

A short silence followed.

“How delightful it must be to feel well and strong!” said Rachel at length. “I can’t help often thinking of Miss Lingard. It’s always Miss Lingard comes up to me when I think of such things! Oh! ain’t she beautiful and strong, Mr. Wingfold?—and sits on her horse as straight as a rush! It does one good to see her. Just fancy me on a great tall horse! What a bag of potatoes I should look!”

She burst into a merry laugh, and then came a few tears, which were not all of the merriment of which she let them pass as the consequence, remarking, as she wiped them away,

“But no one can tell, Mr. Wingfold—and I’m sure Miss Lingard would be astonished to hear—what pleasure I have while lying unable to move. I suppose I benefit by what people call the law of compensation! How I hate the word! As if *that* was the way the Father of Jesus Christ did, and not his very best, to get his children, elder brothers and prodigal sons, home to his heart!—You heard what my uncle said about dreams the other day?” she resumed after a little pause.

“Yes. I thought it very sensible,” replied the curate.

“It all depends on the sort, don't it?” said Rachel. “Some of mine I would not give for a library. They make me grow, telling me things I should never learn otherwise. I don't mean any rubbish about future events, and such like. Of all useless things a knowledge of the future seems to me the most useless, for what are you to do with a thing before it exists? Such a knowledge could only bewilder you as to the right way to take—would make you see double instead of single. That's not the sort I mean at all. You won't laugh at me, Mr. Wingfold?”

“I can scarcely imagine any thing less likely.”

“Then I don't mind opening my toy-box to you. In my dreams, for instance, I am sometimes visited by such a sense of freedom as fills me with a pure bliss unknown to my waking thoughts except as a rosy cloud on the horizon. As if they were some heavenly corporation, my dreams present me, not with the freedom of some poor little city like London, but with the freedom of all space.”

The curate sat and listened with wonder, but with no sense of unfitness: such speech and such thought suited well with the face that looked up from the low pillow with its lovely eyes; for lovely they were with a light that had both flash and force.

“I don't believe,” she went on, “that even Miss Lingard has more of the blessed sense of freedom and strength and motion when she is on horseback than I have when

I am asleep. The very winds of my dreams will make me so unspeakably happy that I wake weeping. Do not tell me it is gone then, for I continue so happy that I can hardly get to sleep again to hunt for more joy. Don't say it is an unreality—for where does freedom lie? In the body or in the mind? What does it matter whether my body be lying still or moving from one spot of space to another? What is the good of motion but to produce the feeling of freedom? The feeling is everything; and if I have it, that is all that I want. Bodily motion would indeed disturb it for me—lay fetters on my spirit.—Sometimes, again, I dream of a new flower—one never before beheld by mortal eye—with some strange, wonderful quality in it, perhaps, that makes it a treasure, like that flower of Milton's invention—haemony—in Comus, you know. But one curious thing is that that strange quality will never be recalled in waking hours; so that what it was I can never tell—as if it belonged to other regions than the life of this world—I retain only the vaguest memory of its power and marvel and preciousness.—Sometimes it is a little poem or a song I dream of, or some strange musical instrument, perhaps like one of those I have seen angels with in a photograph from an old picture. And somehow with the instrument always comes the knowledge of how to play upon it. So you see, sir, as it has pleased God to send me into the world as crooked as a crab, and nearly as lame as a seal, it has pleased him also to give me the health and the riches of the night to strengthen me for the pains and poverties of the day.—You rejoice in a

beautiful thought when it comes to you, Mr. Wingfold, do you not?"

"When it comes to me," answered Wingfold significantly, almost petulantly. Could it be that he envied the dwarf-girl?

"Then is the thought any worse because it comes in a shape? or is the feeling less of a feeling that it is born in a dream?"

"I need no convincing. I admit all you say," returned Wingfold.

"Why are you so silent, then? You make me think you are objecting inside to everything I am saying," rejoined Rachel with a smile.

"Partly because I fear you are exciting yourself too much and will suffer in consequence," answered the curate, who had noted the rosy flush on her face.

The same moment her uncle re-entered the room.

"I have been trying to convince Mr. Wingfold that there *may* be some good in dreaming, uncle," she said.

"Successfully?" asked Polwarth.

"Unnecessarily," interjected Wingfold. "I required for conviction only the facts. Why should I suppose that, if there be a God, he is driven out of us by sleep?"

"It is an awful thing," said Polwarth, "to think that this feeble individuality of ours, the offspring of God's individuality, should have some power, and even more will than power, to close its door against him, and keep house without him!"

"But what sort of a house?" murmured Wingfold.

"Yes uncle," said Rachel; "but think how he keeps

about us, haunting the doors and windows like the very wind, watching to get in ! And sometimes he makes of himself a tempest, that both doors and windows fly open, and he enters in fear and dismay."

The prophetic in the uncle was the poetic in the niece.

"For you and me, uncle," she went on, "he made the doors and windows so rickety that they *could* not keep him out."

"Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost," said the curate, almost unconsciously.

"Ain't we funny temples !" rejoined the girl.

So full was her soul of a lively devotion that she took the liberties of a child of the house with sacred things.

"But, Mr. Wingfold," she continued, "I must tell you one more curious thing about my dreams : I *never* dream of being crooked and dwarfish. I don't dream that I am straight either ; I suppose I feel all right, and therefore never think about it. That makes me fancy my soul must be straight. Don't you think so, sir ?"

"Indeed I do," said Wingfold warmly.

"I am afraid I shall be telling you some of my dreams some day."

"We are rather given to that weakness," said Polwarth, "so much so as to make me fear for our brains sometimes. But a crooked rose-tree may yet bear a good rose."


"Ah ! you are thinking of my poor father, uncle, I know," said Rachel. "His was a straight stem and a fine

rose, only overblown, perhaps. I don't think I need be much afraid of that, for if I were to go out of my mind, I should not have strength to live—except, indeed, I knew God through all the madness. I think my father did in a way."

"It was quite plain he did," answered her uncle, "and that in no feeble way either. Some day I must tell you"—here he turned to Wingfold—"about that brother of mine, Rachel's father. I should even like to show you a manuscript he left behind him—surely one of the strangest ever written! It would be well worth printing if that would insure its falling into the hands of those who could read through the madness.—But we have talked quite long enough for your head, child: I will take Mr. Wingfold into the next room."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BUTTERFLY.

S Wingfold walked home that afternoon, he thought much of what he had heard and seen. "If there be a God," he said to himself, "then all is well, for certainly he would not give being to such a woman, and then throw her aside as a failure and forget her. It is strange to see, though, how he permits his work to be thwarted. To be the perfect God notwithstanding, he must be able to turn the very thwarting to higher furtherance. Don't we see something of the sort in life—the vigorous nursed by the arduous? Is it presumptuous to imagine God saying to Rachel, 'Trust me and bear, and I will do better for thee than thou canst think'? Certainly the one who most needs the comfort of such a faith, in this case *has* it. I wish I could be as sure of him as Rachel Polwarth! But then," he added, smiling to himself, "she has had her crooked spine to help her! It seems as if nothing less than the spiritual behold-

ing of the Eternal will enable at least absolute belief. And till then what better or indeed other proof can the less receive of the presence of the greater than the expansion of its own being under the influences of that greater? But my plague now is that the ideas of religion are so grand, and the things all around it in life so commonplace, that they give the lie to each other from morning to night—in my mind, I mean. Which is the true; a loving, caring father, or the grinding of cruel poverty and the naked exposure to heedless chance? How is it that, while the former seems the only right reasonable, and all-sufficing thing, it should yet come more naturally to believe in the latter? And yet, when I think of it, I never did come closer to believing in the matter than is indicated by terror of its possible truth—so many things looked like it. Then what has nature in common with the Bible and its metaphysics?—There I am wrong: she has a thousand things. The very wind on my face seems to rouse me to fresh effort after a pure, healthy life! Then there is the sunrise! There is the snowdrop in the snow! There is the butter fly! There is the rain of summer, and the clearing of the sky after a storm! There is the hen gathering her chickens under her wing! I begin to doubt whether there be the commonplace anywhere except in our own mistrusting nature, that will cast no care upon the Unseen. It is with me in regard to my better life as it was with the disciples in regard to their bodily life, when they were for the time rendered incapable of understanding the words of our Lord by having forgotten to take bread in the

boat : they were so afraid of being hungry that they could think of nothing but bread."

Such were some of the curate's thoughts as he walked home, and they drove him to prayer, in which came more thoughts. When he reached his room he sat down at his table, and wove and knotted and pieced together the following verses, venturing that easy yet perilous thing, a sonnet. I give here its final shape, not its first or second :

Methought I floated sightless, nor did know
That I had ears until I heard the cry
As of a mighty man in agony :
" How long, Lord, shall I lie thus foul and slow ?
The arrows of thy lightning through me go,
And sting and torture me—yet here I lie
A shapeless mass that scarce can mould a sigh."
The darkness thinned ; I saw a thing below,
Like sheeted corpse, a knot at head and feet.
Slow clomb the sun the mountains of the dead,
And looked upon the world : the silence broke !
A blinding struggle ! then the thunderous beat
Of great exulting pinions stroke on stroke !
And from that world a mighty angel fled.

But upon the heels of the sonnet came, as was natural, according to the law of reaction, a fresh and more appalling, because more self-assertive and verisimilar, invasion of the commonplace. What a foolish, unreal thing he had written ! He caught up his hat and stick and hurried out, thinking to combat the demon better in the open air.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE COMMONPLACE.

IT was evening, and the air was still and warm. Pine street was almost empty save of the red sun, which blinded him so that wherever he looked he could only see great sun-blots. All but a few of the shops were closed, but among the few he was surprised to find that of his friend the linen-draper, who had always been a strong advocate of early closing. The shutters were up, however, though the door stood wide open. He peeped in. To his sun-blinded eyes the shop looked very dark, but he thought he saw Mr. Drew talking to some one, and entered. He was right: it was the draper himself and a poor woman with a child on one arm, and a print dress she had just bought on the other. The curate leaned against the counter, and waited until business should be over to address his friend.

“Is Mr. Drew an embryonic angel?” he half felt, half thought with himself. “Is this shop the chrysalis of a great psyche? Will the draper, with his round, good-

humored face and puckering smile, ever spread thunderous wings and cleave the air up to the throne of God?"

"I can not tell you how it goes against me to take that woman's money," said the voice of the draper.

The curate woke up to the presence of the unwinged, and saw that the woman had left the shop.

"I did let her have the print at cost price," Mr. Drew went on, laughing merrily. "That was all I could venture on."

"Where was the danger?"

"Ah, you don't know so well as I do the good of having some difficulty in getting what you need! To ease the struggles of the poor, except it be in sickness or absolute want, I have repeatedly proved to be a cruel kindness."

"Then you don't sell to the poor women at cost price always?"

"No; only to the soldiers' wives. They have a very hard life of it, poor things."

"That is your custom, then?"

"For the last ten years. But I don't let them know it."

"Is it for the soldiers' wives you keep your shop open so late? I thought you were the great supporter of early closing in Glaston," said the curate.

"I will tell you how it happened to-night," answered the draper, and as he spoke he turned round, not his long left ear upon the pivot of his skull, but his whole person upon the pivot of the counter—to misuse the

word pivot with Wordsworth—and bolted the shop-door.

“After the young men had put up the shutters and were gone,” he said, returning to the counter, “leaving me as usual to bolt the door, I fell a-thinking. Outside, the street was full of sunlight, but only enough came in to show how gloomy the place was without more of it, and the back of the shop was nearly dark. It was very still, too—so still that the silence seemed to have taken the shape of gloom. Pardon me for talking in this un-business-like way: a man can’t be a draper always; he must be foolish sometimes. Thirty years ago I used to read Tennyson. I believe I was among the earliest of his admirers.”

“Foolish!” echoed Wingfold, thoughtfully.

“You see,” the draper went on, “there *is* something solemn in the quiet after business is over. Sometimes it’s more so, sometimes less; but this night it came upon me that the shop felt like a chapel—had the very air of one, somehow, and so I fell a-thinking, and forgot to shut the door. How I began I don’t know, but my past life came up to me, and I remembered how, when I was a young man, I used to despise my father’s business to which he was bringing me up, and feed my fancy with things belonging to higher walks in life. Then I saw that must have been partly how I fell into the mistake of marrying Mrs. Drew. She was the daughter of a doctor in our town, a widower. He was in poor health, and unable to make much of his practice, so that when he died she was left destitute, and for that reason

alone, I do believe, accepted me. What followed you know ; she went away with a man who used to travel for a large Manchester house. I have never heard of her since.

“ After she left me, a sort of something which I think I may call the disease of self-preservation laid hold upon me. I must acknowledge that the loss of my wife was not altogether a misery. She despised my trade, which drove me to defend it—and the more bitterly that I also despised it. There was, therefore, a good deal of strife between us. I did not make allowance enough for the descent she had made from a professional father to a trader-husband. I forgot that, if she was to blame for marrying me for bread, I was to blame for marrying her to enlarge myself with her superiority. After she was gone I was aware of a not unwelcome calm in the house, and in the emptiness of that calm came the demon of selfishness sevenfold into my heart, and took up his abode with me. From that time I busied myself only about two things—the safety of my soul and a good provision for my body. I joined the church I had occasion to mention to you before, sir, grew a little harder in my business dealings, and began to lay by money. And so, ever since, have I been going on till I heard your sermon the other day, which I hope has waked me up to something better. All this long story is but to let you understand how I was feeling when that woman came into the shop. I told you how, in the dusk and the silence, it was as if I were in the chapel. I found myself half listening for the organ. Then the verse of a hymn

came into my mind—I can't tell where or when I had met with it, but it had stuck to me :

“ ‘Let me stand ever at the door,
And keep it from the entering sin,
That so thy temple, walls and floor,
Be pure for thee to enter in.’

Now that, you see, is said of the temple of the heart ; but somehow things went rather cross-cut this evening—they got muddled in my head. It seemed as if I was the door-keeper of my shop, and at the same time as if my shop, spreading out and dimly vanishing in the sacred gloom, was the temple of the Holy Ghost, out of which I had to keep the sin. And with the thought a great awe fell upon me : could it be—might it not be that God was actually in the place ? that in the silence he was thinking—in the gloom he was knowing ? I laid myself over the counter, with my face in my hands, and went on half thinking, half praying. All at once the desire rose burning in my heart, Would to God my house were in truth a holy place, haunted by his presence ! ‘And wherefore not ?’ rejoiced something within me—heart or brain or something deeper than either. ‘Is thy work unholy ? Are thy deeds base ? Is thy buying or selling dishonest ? Is it all for thyself and nothing for thy fellows ? Is it not a lawful calling ? Is it or is it not of God ? If it be of God, and yet he be not present, then surely thy lawful calling thou followest unlawfully !’ So there I was—brought back to the old story. And I said to myself, ‘God knows I want to fol-

low it lawfully. Am I not even now seeking how to do so?' But this, though true, did not satisfy me. To follow it lawfully—even in his sight—no longer seemed enough. Was there then no possibility of raising it to dignity? Did the business of Zaccheus remain, after the visit of Jesus, a contemptible one still? Could not mine be made Christian? Was there no corner in the temple where a man might buy and sell and not be driven out by the whip of small cords? I heard a step in the shop, and lifting my head, saw a poor woman with a child in her arms. Annoyed at being found in that posture, like one drunk or in despair; annoyed also with myself for not having shut the door, with my usual first tendency to injustice a harsh word was trembling on my very lips, when suddenly something made me look round in a kind of maze on the dusky back-shop. A moment more and I understood: God was waiting to see what truth was in my words. That is just how I felt it, and I hope I am not irreverent in saying so. Then I saw that the poor woman looked frightened—I suppose at my looks and gestures; perhaps she thought me out of my mind. I made haste and received her, and listened to her errand as if she had been a duchess—say rather an angel of God, for such I felt her in my heart to be. She wanted a bit of dark print with a particular kind of spot in it, which she had seen in the shop some months before but had not been able to buy. I turned over every thing we had, and was nearly in despair. At last, however, I found the very piece which had ever since haunted her fancy—just enough of it left for a

dress ! But all the time I sought it I felt as if I were doing God service—or at least doing something he wanted me to do. It sounds almost ludicrous now, but—”

“God forbid !” said Wingfold.

“I’m glad you don’t think so, sir. I was afraid you would.”

“Had the thing been a trifle, I should still have said the same,” returned the curate. “But who with any heart would call it a trifle to please the fancy of a poor woman, one who is probably far oftener vexed than pleased? She had been brooding over this dress; you took trouble to content her with her desire. Who knows what it may do for the growth of the woman. I know what you’ve done for me by the story of it !”

“She did walk out pleased-like !” said the draper, “and left me more pleased than she—and so grateful to her for coming, you can’t think !”

“I begin to suspect,” said the curate, after a pause, “that the common transactions of life are the most sacred channels for the spread of the heavenly leaven. There was ten times more of the divine in selling her that gown as you did, in the name of God, than in taking her into your pew and singing out of the same hymn-book with her.”


“I should be glad to do that next, though, if I had the chance,” said Mr. Drew. “You must not think, because he has done me so little good, that our minister is not a faithful preacher; and, owing you more than heart can tell, sir, I like chapel better than church, and consider it

nearer the right way. I don't mean to be a turncoat and leave Drake for you, sir. I must give up my deaconship, but I won't my pew or my subscription."

"Quite right, Mr. Drew!" said Wingfold. "That could do nothing but harm. I have just been reading what our Lord says about proselytizing. Good night."

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOME AGAIN.

HE curate had entered the draper's shop in the full blaze of sunset, but the demon of unbelief sat on his shoulders: he could get no nearer his heart, but that was enough to make of the "majestical roof fretted with golden fire a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors." When he left the shop, the sun was far below the horizon, and the glory had faded out of the west; but the demon had fled, and the brown feathers of the twilight were beautiful as the wings of the silver dove sprung heavenwards from among the pots. And as he went he reasoned with himself: "Either there is a God, and that God the perfect heart of truth and loveliness, or all poetry and art is but an unsown, unplanted, rootless flower crowning a somewhat symmetrical heap of stones. The man who sees no beauty in its petals, finds no perfume in its breath, may well accord it the parentage of the stones; the man whose heart swells beholding it, will be ready to think it has roots that reach below them."

The curate's search, it will be remarked, had already widened greatly the sphere of his doubts; but the larger the field the greater the chance of finding a marl-pit; and if there be such a thing as truth, every fresh doubt is yet another finger-post pointing towards its dwelling. So talked the curate to himself, and, full in the face, rounding the corner of a street, met George Bascombe.

The young barrister held out his large hospitable hand at the full length of his arm, and spread abroad his wide chest to greet him, and they went through the ceremony of shaking hands—which, even in their case, I can not judge so degrading and hypocritical as the Latin nations seem to consider it. Then Wingfold had the first word.

“I have not yet had an opportunity of thanking you for the great service you have done me,” he said.

“I am glad to know I have such an honor; but—”

“I mean in opening my eyes to my true position.”

“Ah, my dear fellow! I was sure you only required to have your attention turned in the right direction. When—ah!—I—I was on the verge of committing the solecism of asking when you thought of resigning! Ha! ha!”

“Not yet,” replied Wingfold to the question thus at once withdrawn and put. “The more I look into the matter, the more reason I find for hoping it may be possible for me to—to keep the appointment.”

“Oh!”

“The further I inquire, the more am I convinced that if not in a certain portion of what the church teaches, then nowhere else, and assuredly not in what you teach,

shall I find any thing by which life can either account for or justify itself."

"But if what you find is not true!" cried George, with a burst of semi-grand indignation.

"But if what I find should be true, even though you should never be able to see it!" returned the curate.

And as if disjected by an explosion between them, the two men were ten paces asunder, each hurrying his own way.

"If I can't prove there is a God," said Wingfold to himself, "as little surely can he prove there is none!"

But then came the thought, "The fellow will say that, there being no sign of a God, the burden of proof lies with me."

And therewith he saw how useless it would be to discuss the question with any one who, not seeing him, had no desire to see him.

"No!" he said, "my business is not to prove to any other man that there is a God, but to find him for myself. If I should find him, then will be time enough to think of showing him."

And with that his thoughts turned from Bascombe and went back to the draper. When he reached home he took out his sonnet, but after working at it for a little while, he found that he must ease his heart by writing another. Here it is:

Methought that in a solemn church I stood.
Its marble acres, worn with knees and feet,
Lay spread from door to door, from street to street.
Midway the form hung high upon the road

Of Him who gave his life to be our good ;
Beyond, priests flitted, bowed, and murmured meet
Among the candles shining still and sweet.
Men came and went, and worshipped as they could,
And still their dust a woman with her broom,
Bowed to her work, kept sweeping to the door,
Then saw I, slow through all the pillared gloom,
Across the church a silent figure come :
" Daughter," it said, " thou sweepest well my floor !"
It is the Lord, I cried, and saw no more.

I suppose if one could so stop the throat of the blossom-buried nightingale that, though he might breathe at will, he could no longer sing, he would drop from his bough, and die of suppressed song. Perhaps some men so die ; I do not know : it were better than to live and bore their friends with the insuppressible ! But however this may be, the man who can utter himself to his own joy in any of the forms of human expression, let him give thanks to God ; and if he give not his verses to the printer, he will probably have cause to give thanks again. To the man's self the utterance is, not the less, invaluable. And so Wingfold found it.

He went out again and into the churchyard, where he sat down on a stone.

" How strange," he said to himself, " that out of faith should have sprung that stone church. A poor little poem now and then is all that stands for mine !—all that shows, that is. But my heart does sometimes burn within me ! If only I could be sure they were *his* words that set it burning !"

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SHEATH.



MR WINGFOLD," said Polwarth one evening, the usual salutations over, taking what he commonly left to his friend—the initiative,—
"I want to tell you something I don't wish even Rachel to hear."

He led the way to his room, and the curate followed. Seated there, in the shadowy old attic, through the very walls of which the ivy grew, and into which, by the open window in the gable, from the infinite west blew the evening air, carrying with it the precious scent of honeysuckle to mingle with that of old books, Polwarth recounted and Wingfold listened to a strange adventure. The trees hid the sky, and the little human nest was dark around them.

"I am going to make a confidant of you, Mr. Wingfold," said the dwarf, with troubled face and almost whispered word. "You will know how much I have already learned to trust you when I say that what I am about to confide to you plainly involves the secret of another."

His large face grew paler as he spoke, and something almost like fear grew in his eyes, but they looked straight into those of the curate, and his voice did not tremble.

“One night, some weeks ago—I can, if necessary, make myself certain of the date,—I was—no uncommon thing with me—unable to sleep. Sometimes, when such is my case, I lie as still and happy as any bird under the wing of its mother ; at other times I must get up and go out : for I take longings for air almost as a drunkard for wine, and that night nothing would serve my poor imprisoned soul but more air through the bars of its lungs. I rose, dressed, and went out.

“It was a still, warm night, no moon, but plenty of star-light, the wind blowing as now, gentle and sweet and cool—just the wind my lungs sighed for. I got into the open park, avoiding the trees, and wandered on and on, without thinking where I was going. The turf was soft under my feet, the dusk soft to my eyes, and the wind to my soul ; I had breath and room and leisure and silence and loneliness, and everything to make me more than usually happy ; and so I wandered on and on, neither caring nor looking whither I went : so long as the stars remained unclouded I could find my way back when I pleased.

“I had been out perhaps an hour, when through the soft air came a cry, apparently from far off. There was something in the tone that seemed to me unusually frightful. The bare sound made me shudder before I had time to say to myself it was a cry. I turned my face in the direction of it, so far as I could judge, and went

on. I can not run, for if I attempt it I am in a moment unable even to walk—from palpitation and choking.

“I had not gone very far before I found myself approaching the hollow where stands the old house of Glaston, uninhabited for twenty years. Was it possible, I thought, that the cry came from the house, and had, therefore, sounded farther off than it was? I stood and listened for a moment, but all seemed still as the grave. I must go in, and see whether any one was there in want of help. You may well smile at the idea of my helping any one, for what could I do if it came to a struggle?”

“On the contrary,” interrupted Wingfold, “I was smiling with admiration of your pluck.”

“At least,” resumed Polwarth, “I have this advantage over some, that I cannot be fooled with the fancy that this poor miserable body of mine is worth thinking of beside the smallest suspicion of duty. What is it but a cracked jug? So down the slope I went, got into the garden, and made my way through the tangled bushes to the house. I knew the place perfectly, for I had often wandered all over it, sometimes spending hours there.

“Before I reached the door, however, I heard some one behind me in the garden, and instantly stepped into a thicket of gooseberry and currant bushes. It is sometimes an advantage to be little: the moment I stepped aside I was hidden. That same moment the night seemed rent in twain by a most hideous cry from the house. Ere I could breathe again after it, the tall figure of a wo-

man rushed past me, tearing its way through the bushes towards the door. I followed instantly, saw her run up the steps, and heard her open and shut the door. I opened it as quietly as I could, but just as I stepped into the dark hall came a third fearful cry, through the echoes of which in the empty house I heard the rush of hurried feet and trailing garments on the stair. As I say, I knew the house quite well, but my perturbation had so muddled the idea of it in my brain, that for a few seconds I had to consider how it lay. The moment I recalled its plan, I made what haste I could, reached the top of the stair, and was hesitating which way to turn, when once more came the fearful cry, and set me trembling from head to foot. I can not describe the horror of it. It was as the cry of a soul in torture—unlike any sound of the human voice I had ever before heard. I shudder now at the recollection of it as it echoed through the house, clinging to the walls and driven along. I was hurrying I knew not whither, for I had again lost all notion of the house, when I caught a glimpse of a light shining from under a door. I approached it softly, and finding that door inside a small closet, knew at once where I was. As I was in office on the ground, and it could hardly be anything righteous that led to such an outcry in the house which, although deserted, was still my master's, I felt justified in searching further into the matter. Laying my ear, therefore, against the door, I heard what was plainly enough a lady's voice. Right sweet and womanly it was, though full of pain—even agony, I thought, but heroically sup-

pressed. She soothed, she expostulated, she condoled, she coaxed. Mingled with hers was the voice of youth, as it seemed. It was wild, yet so low as sometimes to be all but inaudible, and not a word from either could I distinguish. Hardly the less plain was it, however, that the youth spoke either in delirium or with something terrible on his mind, for his tones were those of one in despair. I stood for a time bewildered, fascinated, terrified. At length I grew convinced somehow that I had no right to be there. Doubtless the man was in hiding, and where a man hides there must be reason; but was it any business of mine? I crept out of the house, and up to the higher ground. There I drew deep breaths of the sweet night air—so pure that it seemed to be washing the world clean for another day's uses. But I had no longer any pleasure in the world. I went straight home, and to bed again—but had brought little repose with me: I must do something, but what? The only result certain to follow was more trouble to the troubled already. Might there not be innocent reasons for the questionable situation? Might not the man have been taken ill, and so suddenly that he could reach no other shelter? And the lady might be his wife, who had gone as soon as she could leave him to find help, but had failed. There *must* be some simple explanation of the matter, however strange it showed! I might, in the morning, be of service to them. And partly comforted by the temporary conclusion, I got a little troubled sleep.

“As soon as I had had a cup of tea, I set out for the old house. I heard the sounds of the workmen's hammers

on the new one as I went. All else was silence. The day looked so honest and so clear of conscience that it was difficult to believe the night had shrouded such an awful meeting. Yet, in the broad light of the forenoon, a cold shudder seized me when first I looked down on the slack ridges and broken roofs of the old house. When I got into the garden I began to sing and knock the bushes about, then opened the door noisily, and clattered about in the hall and the lower rooms before going up the stair. Along every passage and into every room I went, to give good warning ere I approached that in which I had heard the voices. At length I stood at the door of it and knocked. There was no answer. I knocked again. Still no answer. I opened it and peeped in. There was no one there! An old bedstead was all I saw. I searched every corner, but not one trace could I discover of human being having been there, except this behind the bed—and it may have lain there as long as the mattress, which I remember since the first time I ever went into the house.”

As he spoke, Polwarth handed to the curate a small leather sheath, which, from its shape, could not have belonged to a pair of scissors, although neither of the men knew any sort of knife it would have fitted.

“Would you mind taking care of it, Mr. Wingfold?” the gate-keeper continued as the curate examined it; “I don’t like having it. I can’t even bear to think of it in the house, and yet I don’t quite care to destroy it.”

“I don’t in the least mind taking charge of it,” answered Wingfold.

Why was it that, as he said so, the face of Helen Lingard rose before his mind's eye as he had now seen it twice in the congregation at the Abbey—pale with an inward trouble, as it seemed, large-eyed and worn—so changed, yet so ennobled? Even then he had felt the deadening effect of its listlessness, and had had to turn away lest it should compel him to feel that he was but talking to the winds, or into a desert where dwelt no voice of human response. Why should he think of her now? Was it that her troubled, pallid face had touched him—had set something near his heart a-trembling, whether with merely human sympathy or with the tenderness of man for suffering woman? Certainly he had never till then thought of her with the slightest interest, and why should she come up to him now? Could it be that— Good heaven! There was her brother ill! And had not Faber said there seemed something unusual about the character of his illness? What could it mean? It was impossible, of course—but yet—and yet—

“Do you think,” he said, “we are in any way bound to inquire further into the affair?”

“If I had thought so, I should not have left it unmentioned till now,” answered Polwarth. “But without being busybodies, we might be prepared in case the thing should unfold itself, and put it in our power to be useful. Meantime I have the relief of the confessional.”

CHAPTER XLV.

INVITATION.



AS Wingfold walked back to his lodgings, he found a new element mingling with the varied matter of his previous inquiry. Human suffering laid hold upon him—neither as his own nor as that of humanity, but as that of men and women—known or unknown, it mattered nothing : there were hearts in the world from whose agony broke terrible cries, hearts of which sad faces like that of Miss Lingard were the exponents. Such hearts might be groaning and writhing in any of the houses he passed, and, even if he knew the hearts, and what the vampire that sucked their blood, he could do nothing for their relief. Little indeed could he have imagined the life of such a comfort-guarded lady as Miss Lingard, exposed to the intrusion of any terror-waking monster, from the old ocean of chaos into the quiet flow of its meadow-banked river ! And what multitudes must there not be in the world—what multitudes in our island ; how many even in Glaston, whose hearts, lacerated by no remorse,

overwhelmed by no crushing sense of guilt, yet knew their own bitterness, and had no friend radiant enough to make a sunshine in their shady places ! He fell into mournful mood over the troubles of his race. Always a kind-hearted fellow, he had not been used to think about such things ; he had had troubles of his own, and had got through at least some of them ; people must have troubles, else would they grow unendurable for pride and insolence. But now that he had begun to hope he saw a glimmer somewhere afar at the end of the darksome cave in which he had all at once discovered that he was buried alive, he began also to feel how wretched those must be who were groping on without even a hope in their dark eyes.

If he had never committed any crime, he had yet done wrong enough to understand the misery of shame and dishonor, and should he not find a loving human heart the heart of the world, would rejoice—with what rejoicing might then be possible to accept George Bascombe's theory, and drop into the jaws of darkness and cease. How much more miserable, then, must those be who had committed some terrible crime, or dearly loved one, who had ! What relief, what hope, what lightening for them ! What a breeding-nest of vermiculate cares and pains was this human heart of ours ! Oh ! surely it needed some refuge ! If no saviour had yet come, the tortured world of human hearts cried aloud for one with unutterable groaning ! What would Bascombe do if he had committed a murder ? Or what could he do for one who had ? If fable it were, it was

at least a need-invented one—that of a Saviour to whom any one might go, at any moment, without a journey, without letters or commendations or credentials! And yet no: if it had been invented, it could hardly be by any one in the need, for such even now could hardly be brought to believe it. Ill-bested were the world indeed if there were no one beyond whose pardon crime could not go! Ah! but where was the good of pardon if still the conscious crime kept stinging? and who would wish one he loved to grow callous to the crime he had committed? Could one rejoice that his guilty friend had learned to laugh again, able at length to banish the memory of the foul thing? Would reviving self-content render him pleasant to the eyes, and his company precious in the wisdom that springs from the knowledge of evil? Would not that be the moment when he who had most assiduously sought to comfort him in his remorse, would first be tempted to withdraw his foot from his threshold? But if there was a God—such a God as, according to the Christian story, had sent his own son into the world: had given him to appear among us, clothed in the garb of humanity, the armor that can be pierced, to take all the consequences of being the god of obedience among the children of disobedience, engulfing their wrongs in his infinite forbearance, and winning them back, by slow and unpromising and tedious renewal, to the heart of his father, surely such a God would not have created them knowing that some of them would sin sins from the horror of which in themselves all his devotion could not redeem them! And as he thought

thus, the words arose in his mind, "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" His heart filled. He pondered over them. When he got home, he sought and found them in the book. Did a man ever really utter them? If a man did, either he was the most presumptuous of mortals, or *he could do what he said*. If he could, then to have seen and distrusted that man, Wingfold felt, would have been to destroy in himself the believing faculty and become incapable of trusting forever after. And such a man must, in virtue of his very innocence, know that the worst weariness and the worst load is evil and crime, and must know himself able, in full righteousness, with no jugglery of oblivion or self-esteem, to take off the heavy load and give rest.

"And yet," thought the curate, not without self-reproach, "for one who will go to him to get the rest, a thousand will ask, *How can he then do it?* As if they should be fit to know!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

A SERMON TO HELEN.



ALL the rest of the week his mind was full of thoughts like these, amidst which ever arose the suffering face of Helen Lingard, bringing with it the still strengthening suspicion that behind it must lay some oppressive, perhaps terrible, secret. But he made no slightest movement towards the discovery of it, put not a single question in any direction for its confirmation or dissolution. He would not look in at her windows, but what seeds of comfort he could find, he would scatter wide, and hope that some of them might fall into her garden.

When he raised his head on the Sunday from kneeling, with heart honest, devout, and neighborly, in the pulpit before the sermon, and cast his eyes round his congregation, they rested first, for one moment and no more, upon the same pallid and troubled countenance whose reflection had so often of late looked out from the magic mirror of his memory; the next, they flitted across the satisfied, healthy, handsome, clever face of her cousin,

behind which plainly sat a conscience well-to-do, in an easy-chair ; the third, they saw and fled the peevish autumnal visage of Mrs. Ramshorn ; the next, they roved a little, then rested on the draper's good-humored disk, on the white forehead of which brooded a cloud of thoughtfulness. Last of all they sought the free seats, and found the faces of both the dwarfs. It was the first time he had seen Rachel's there, and it struck him that it expressed greater suffering than he had read in it before. She ought rather to be in bed than in church, he thought. But the same seemed the case with her uncle's countenance also ; and with that came the conclusion that the pulpit was a wonderful watch-tower whence to study human nature ; that people lay bare more of their real nature and condition to the man in the pulpit than they know—even before the sermon. Their faces had fallen into the shape of their minds, for the church has an isolating as well as congregating power, and no passing emotion moulds them to an evanescent show. When Polwarth spoke to a friend, the suffering melted in issuing radiance ; when he sat thus quiescent, patient endurance was the first thing to be read on his countenance. This flashed through the curate's mind in the moments ere he began to speak, and with it came afresh the feeling—one that is yet ought not to be sad—that no one of all these hearts could give summer weather to another. The tears rose in his eyes as he gazed, and his heart swelled towards his own flesh and blood, as if his spirit would break forth in a torrent of ministering tenderness and comfort. Then he made haste to speak

lest he should become unable. As usual his voice trembled at first, but rose into strength as his earnestness found way. This is a good deal like what he said:

“The marvellous man who is reported to have appeared in Palestine, teaching and preaching, seems to have suffered far more from sympathy with the inward sorrows of his race than from pity for their bodily pains. These last could he not have swept from the earth with a word? and yet it seems to have been mostly, if not indeed always, only in answer to prayer that he healed them, and that for the sake of some deeper, some spiritual healing that should go with the bodily cure. It could not be for the dead man whom he was about to call from the tomb that his tears flowed. What source could they have but compassion and pitiful sympathy for the sorrows of the dead man’s sisters and friends who had not the inward joy that sustained himself, and the thought of all the pains and heartaches of those that looked in the face of death—the moanings of love-torn generations, the blackness of bereavement that had stormed through the ever-changing world of human hearts since first man had been made in the image of his Father? Yet are there far more terrible troubles than this death—which I trust can only part, not keep apart. There is the weight of conscious wrong-being and wrong-doing: that is the gravestone that needs to be rolled away ere a man can rise to life. Call to mind how Jesus used to forgive men’s sins, thus lifting from their hearts the crushing load that paralyzed all their efforts. Recall the tenderness with which he received those from

whom the religious of his day turned aside—the repentant women who wept sore-hearted from very love, the publicans who knew they were despised because they were despicable. With him they sought and found shelter. He was their saviour from the storm of human judgment and the biting frost of public opinion, even when that opinion and that judgment were re-echoed by the justice of their own hearts. He received them, and the life within them rose up, and the light shone—the conscious light of life—despite even of shame and self-reproach. If God be for us who can be against us? In his name they rose from the hell of their own heart's condemnation, and went forth to do the truth in strength and hope. They heard and believed and obeyed his words. And of all words that ever were spoken, were ever words gentler, tenderer, humbler, lovelier—if true, or more arrogant, man-degrading, God-defying,—if false, than these, concerning which, *as his*, I now desire to speak to you: *'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light'?*

“Surely these words, could they but be heartily believed, are such as every human heart might gladly hear! What man is there who has not had, has not now, or will not have to class himself amongst the weary and heavy-laden? Ye who call yourselves Christians profess to believe such rest is to be had, yet how many of you go bowed to the very earth, and take no single

step towards him who says *Come*, lift not an eye to see whether a face of mercy may not be looking down upon you! Is it that, after all, you do not believe there ever was such a man as they call Jesus? That can hardly be. There are few so ignorant or so wilfully illogical as to be able to *disbelieve* in the existence of the man, or that he spoke words to this effect. Is it then that you are doubtful concerning the whole import of his appearance? In that case, were it but as a doubtful medicine, would it not be well to make some trial of the offer made? If the man said the words, he must have at least believed that he could fulfil them. Who that knows any thing of him at all can for a moment hold that this man spoke what he did not believe? The best of the Jews, who yet do not believe in him, say of him that he was a good though mistaken man. Will a man lie for the privilege of being despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? What but the confidence of truth could have sustained him when he knew that even those who loved him would have left him had they believed what he told them of his coming fate? But then: believing what he said, might he not have been mistaken? A man can hardly be mistaken as to whether he is at peace or not—whether he has rest in his soul or not. Neither, I think, can a man well be mistaken as to whence comes the peace he possesses—as to the well whence he draws his comfort. The miser knows his comfort is his gold. Was Jesus likely to be mistaken when he supposed himself to know that his comfort came from his God? Anyhow he believed that

his peace came from his obedience—from his oneness with the will of his Father. Friends, if I had such peace as was plainly his, should I not know well whence it came? But I think I hear some one say, ‘Doubtless the good man derived comfort from the thought of his Father, but might he not be mistaken in supposing there was any Father?’ Hear me, my friends: I dare not say I know there is a Father. I dare not even say I think; I can only say with my whole heart I hope we have indeed a Father in heaven; but this man says *he knows*. Am *I* to say he does not know? Can I, who know so much I would gladly have otherwise in myself, imagine *him* less honest than I am? If he tells me he knows, I am dumb and listen. One *I know: there is*, outweighs a whole creation of voices crying each *I know not, therefore there is not*. And observe it is his own, his own best he wants to give them; no bribe to obedience to his will, but the assurance of bliss if they will do as he does. He wants them to have peace—*his* peace—peace from the same source whence he has it. For what does he mean by *Take my yoke upon you and learn of me*? He does not mean, *Wear the yoke I lay upon you, and obey my words*. I do not say he might not have said so, or that he does not say what comes to the same thing at other times, but that is not what he says here—that is not the truth he would convey in these words. He means, *Take upon you the yoke I wear; learn to do as I do, who submit every thing and refer every thing to the will of my Father, yea, have my will only in the carrying out of his: be meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*. With

all the grief of humanity in his heart, in the face of the death that awaited him, he yet says, *For my yoke, the yoke I wear, is easy, the burden I bear is light.* What made that yoke easy—that burden light? That it was the will of the Father. If a man answer, ‘Any good man who believed in a God might say as much, and I do not see how it can help me,’ my reply is, that this man says *Come unto me, and I will give you rest*—asserting the power to give perfect help to him that comes. Does all this look far away, my friends, and very unlike the things about us? The things about you do not give you peace; from something different you may hope to gain it. And do not our souls themselves fall out with their surroundings, and cry for a nobler, better, more beautiful life?


“But some one will perhaps say, ‘It is well; but were I meek and lowly in heart as he of whom you speak, it could not touch *my* trouble: that springs not from myself, but from one whom I love.’ I answer, if the peace be the peace of the Son of Man, it must reach to every cause of unrest. And if thou hadst it, would it not then be next door to thy friend? How shall he whom thou lovest receive it the most readily but through thee who lovest him? What if thy faith should be the next step to his? Anyhow, if this peace be not an all-reaching as well as a heart-filling peace; if it be not a righteous and a lovely peace, and that in despite of all surrounding and opposing troubles, then it is not the peace of God, for that passeth all understanding: so at least say they who profess to know, and I desire

to take them at their word. If thy trouble be a trouble thy God can not set right, then either thy God is not the true God or there is no true God, and the man who professed to reveal him led the one perfect life in virtue of his faith in a falsehood. Alas! for poor men and women and their aching hearts!—If it offend any of you that I speak of Jesus as *the man* who professed to reveal God, I answer that the man I see, and he draws me as with the strength of the adorable Truth; but if in him I should certainly find the God for the lack of whose peace I and my brethren and sisters pine, then were heaven itself too narrow to hold my exultation, for in God himself alone could my joy find room.

“Come, then, sore heart, and see whether his heart can not heal thine. He knows what sighs and tears are, and if he knew no sin in himself, the more pitiful must it have been to him to behold the sighs and tears that guilt wrung from the tortured hearts of his brethren and sisters. Brothers, sisters, we *must* get rid of this misery of ours. It is slaying us. It is turning the fair earth into a hell, and our hearts into its fuel. There stands the man who says he knows: take him at his word. Go to him who says in the might of his eternal tenderness and his human pity, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

CHAPTER XLVII.

A SERMON TO HIMSELF.

ONG ere he thus came to a close, Wingfold was blind to all and every individuality before him—felt only the general suffering of the human soul, and the new-born hope for it that lay in the story of the ideal man, the human God. He did not see that Helen's head was down on the book-board. She was sobbing convulsively. In some way the word had touched her, and had unsealed the fountain of tears, if not of faith. Neither did he see the curl on the lip of Bascombe, or the glance of annoyance which, every now and then, he cast upon the bent head beside him. "What on earth are you crying about? It is all in the way of his business, you know," said Bascombe's eyes, but Helen did not hear them. One or two more in the congregation were weeping, and here and there shone a face in which the light seemed to prevent the tears. Polwarth shone and Rachel wept. For the rest, the congregation listened only with varying degrees of attention and indifference. The larger

portion looked as if neither Wingfold nor any other body ever meant any thing—at least in the pulpit.

The moment Wingfold reached the vestry he hurried off the garments of his profession, sped from the Abbey, and all but ran across the churchyard to his lodging. There he shut himself up in his chamber, fearful lest he should have said more than he had yet a right to say, and lest ebbing emotion should uncover the fact that he been but “fired by the running of his own wheels,” and not inspired by the guide of “the fiery-wheeled throne, the cherub Contemplation.” There, from the congregation, from the church, from the sermon, from the past altogether, he turned aside his face and would forget them quite. What had he to do with the thing that was done—done with, and gone, either into the treasury or the lumber-room of creation? Towards the hills of help he turned his face—to the summits over whose tops he looked for the day-spring from on high to break forth. If only Christ would come to him! Do what he might, however, his thoughts *would* wander back to the great Gothic gulf into which he had been pouring out his soul, and the greater human gulfs that opened into the ancient pile, whose mouths were the faces that hid the floor beneath them—until at length he was altogether vexed with himself for being interested in what he had done instead of absorbed in what he had yet to do. He left, therefore, his chamber, and placed himself at a side-table in his sitting-room, while his landlady prepared the other for his dinner. She, too, had been at church that morning, whence it

came that she moved about and set the things on the table with unusual softness, causing him no interruption while he wrote down a line here and there of what afterwards grew into the following verses—born in the effort to forget the things that were behind, and reach forth after the things that lay before him :

Yes, master, when thou comest thou shalt find
A little faith on earth, if I am here !
Thou know'st how oft I turn to thee my mind,
How sad I wait until thy face appear !

Hast thou not ploughed my thorny ground full sore,
And from it gathered many stones and sherds ?
Plough, plough and harrow till it needs no more—
Then sow thy mustard-seed, and send thy birds.

I love thee, Lord ; and if I yield to fears,
Nor trust with triumph that pale doubt defies,
Remember, Lord, 'tis nigh two thousand years,
And I have never seen thee with mine eyes.

And when I lift them from the wondrous tale,
See, all about me hath so strange a show !
Is that thy river running down the vale ?
Is that thy wind that through the pines doth blow ?

Could'st thou right verily appear again,
The same who walked the paths of Palestine,
And here in England teach thy trusting men,
In church and field and house, with word and sign ?

Here are but lilies, sparrows, and the rest !

My hands on some dear proof would light and stay !

But my heart sees John leaning on thy breast,

And sends them forth to do what thou dost say.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CRITICISM.



EXTRAORDINARY young man!" exclaimed Mrs. Ramshorn as they left the church, with a sigh that expressed despair. "Is he an infidel or a fanatic? a Jesuit or a Socinian?"

"If he would pay a little more attention to his composition," said Bascombe indifferently, "he might in time make of himself a good speaker. I am not at all sure there are not the elements of an orator in him, if he would only reflect a little on the fine relations between speech and passion, and learn of the best models how to play upon the feelings of a congregation. I declare I don't know but he might make a great man of himself. As long as he don't finish his sentences, however, jumbles his figures, and begins and ends abruptly without either exordium or peroration, he needn't look to make any thing of a preacher—and that seems his object."

"If that be his object, he had better join the Methodists at once. He would be a treasure to them," said Mrs. Ramshorn.

“That is not his object, George. How can you say so?” remarked Helen quietly, but with some latent indignation.

George smiled a rather unpleasant smile, and held his peace.

Little more was said on the way home. Helen went to take off her bonnet, but did not reappear until she was called to their early Sunday dinner.

Now George had counted upon a turn in the garden with her before dinner, and was annoyed—more, it is true, because of the emotion which he rightly judged the cause of her not joining him, than the necessity laid on him of eating his dinner without having first unburdened his mind; but the latter fact also had its share in vexing him.

When she came into the drawing-room it was plain she had been weeping; but, although they were alone, and would probably have to wait yet a few minutes before their aunt joined them, he resolved in his good nature to be considerate, and say nothing till after dinner, lest he should spoil her appetite. When they rose from the table she would have again escaped, but when George left his wine and followed her, she consented, at his urgent, almost expostulatory, request, to walk once round the garden with him.

As soon as they were out of sight of the windows, he began—in the tone of one whose love it is that prompts rebuke—

“How *could* you, my dear Helen, have so little care of your health, already so much shaken with nursing your

brother, as to yield your mind to the maundering of that silly ecclesiastic, and allow his false eloquence to untune your nerves! Remember your health is the first thing—positively the *first* and foremost thing to be considered, both for your own sake and that of your friends. Without health, what is any thing worth?"

Helen made no answer, but she thought with herself there were two or three things for the sake of which she would willingly part with a considerable portion of her health. Her cousin imagined her conscience-stricken, and resumed with yet greater confidence:

"If you *must* go to church, you ought to prepare yourself beforehand by firmly impressing on your mind the fact that the whole thing is but part of a system—part of a false system; that the preacher has been brought up to the trade of religion, that it is his business, and that he must lay himself out to persuade people—himself first of all if he can, but anyhow his congregation—of the truth of every thing contained in that farra-go of priestly absurdities called the Bible, forsooth! as if there were no other book worthy to be mentioned beside it. Think, for a moment, how soon, were it not for their churches and prayers and music, and their tomfoolery of preaching, the whole precious edifice would topple about their ears, and the livelihood, the means of contentment and influence, would be gone from so many restless, paltering spirits! So what is left them but to play upon the hopes and fears and diseased consciences of men as best they can! The idiot! To tell a man when he is hipped to *come unto me!* Bah! Does

the fool really expect any grown man or woman to believe in his or her brain that the man who spoke those words, if ever there was a man who spoke them, can at this moment, *anni domini*"—George liked to be correct—"1870, hear whatever silly words the Rev. Mr. Wingfold or any other human biped may think proper to address to him with his face buried in his blankets by his bedside or in his surplice over the pulpit Bible?—not to mention that they would have you believe, or be damned to all eternity, that every thought vibrated in the convolutions of your brain is known to him as well as to yourself! The thing is really too absurd! Ha! ha! ha! The man died—the death of a malefactor, they say—and his body was stolen from his grave by his followers, that they might impose thousands of years of absurdity upon the generations to come after them. And now, when a fellow feels miserable, he is to cry to that dead man who said of himself that he was meek and lowly in heart, and straightway the poor beggar shall find rest to his soul! All I can say is that if he find rest so, it will be the rest of an idiot! Believe me, Helen, a good Havana and a bottle of claret would be considerably more to the purpose; for ladies, perhaps rather a cup of tea and a little Beethoven!" Here he laughed, for the rush of his eloquence had swept away his bad-humor. "But really," he went on, "the whole thing is *too* absurd to talk about. To go whining after an old Jew fable in these days of progress! Why, what do you think is the last discovery about light?"

"You will allow this much in excuse for their being

so misled," returned Helen, with some bitterness, "that the old fable pretends at least to provide help for sore hearts; and except it be vivisection, I—"

"Do be serious, Helen," interrupted George. "I don't object to joking, you know, but you are not joking in a right spirit. This matter has to do with the well-being of the race; and we *must* think of others, however your Jew-gospel, in the genuine spirit of the Hebrew of all time, would set every body to the saving of his own wind-bubble of a soul. Believe me, to live for others is the true way to lose sight of our own fancied sorrows."

Helen gave a deep sigh. Fancied sorrows!—Yes, gladly indeed would she live for *one* other at least! Nay, more—she would die for him. But, alas! what would that do for one whose very being was consumed with grief ineffable! She must speak, else he would read her heart.

"There are real sorrows," she said. "They are not all fancied."

"There are very few sorrows," returned George, "in which fancy does not bear a stronger proportion than even a woman of sense, while the fancy is upon her, will be prepared to admit. I can remember bursts of grief, when I was a boy, in which it seemed impossible anything should ever console me; but in one minute all would be gone, and my heart, or my spleen, or my diaphragm as merry as ever. Believe that all is well, and you will find all will be well—very tolerably well, that is, considering."

"Considering that the well-being has to be divided

and apportioned and accommodated to the various parts of such a huge whole, and that there is no God to look after the business!" said Helen, who, according to the state of the tide in the sea of her trouble, resented or accepted her cousin's teaching.

Few women are willing to believe in death. Most of them love life and are faithful to hope; and I much doubt whether, if Helen had but had a taste of trouble to rouse the woman within her before her cousin conceived the wish of making her a proselyte, she would have turned even a tolerably patient ear to his instructions. Yet it is strange to see how even noble women, with the divine gift of imagination, may be argued into unbelief in their best instincts by some small man, as commonplace as clever, who beside them is as limestone to marble. The knowing craft comes creeping up into the shadow of the rich galleon, and lo! with all her bountiful sails gleaming in the sun, the ship of God glides off in the wake of the felucca to the sweltering hollows betwixt the winds!

"You perplex me, my dear cousin," said Bascombe. "It is plain your nursing has been too much for you. You see every thing with a jaundiced eye."

"Thank you, cousin George," said Helen. "You are even more courteous than usual."

She turned from him and went into the house. Bascombe walked to the bottom of the garden and lighted his cigar, confessing to himself that for once he could not understand Helen.—Was it, then, only that he was ignorant of the awful fact that lay burrowing in her

heart, or was he not ignorant also of the nature of that heart in which such a fact must so burrow? Was there any thing in his system to wipe off that burning, torturing red? "Such things must be: men who wrong society must suffer for the sake of that society." But the red lay burning on the conscience of Helen too, and she had not murdered! And for him who had, he gave society never a thought, but shrieked aloud in his dreams, and moaned and wept, when he waked, over the memory of the woman who had wronged him, and whom he had, if Bascombe was right, swept out of being like an aphid from a rose-leaf.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A VANISHING GLIMMER.



HELEN ran upstairs, dropped on her knees by her brother's bedside, and fell into a fit of sobbing which no tears came to relieve.

"Helen! Helen! if you give way I shall go mad!" said a voice of misery from the pillow.

She jumped up wiping her dry eyes.

"What a wicked, selfish, bad sister, bad nurse, bad every thing I am, Poldie!" she said, her tones ascending the steps of vocal indignation as she spoke. "But shall I tell you"—here she looked all about the chamber and into the dressing-room ere she proceeded—"shall I tell you, Poldie, what it is that makes me so—I don't know what?—It is all the fault of the sermon I heard this morning. It is the first sermon I ever really listened to in my life—certainly the first I ever thought about again after I was out of the church. Somehow or other of late Mr. Wingfold has been preaching so strangely! but this is the first time I have cared to listen. Do you know he preaches as if he actually believed the things he was

saying, and not only that, but as if he expected to persuade you of them too ! I *used* to think all clergymen believed them, but I doubt it now more than ever, for Mr. Wingfold speaks so differently and looks so different. I never saw any clergyman look like that ; and I never saw such a change on a man as there is on him. There must be something to account for it. Could it be that he has himself really gone to—as he says—and found rest—or something he hadn't got before ? But you won't know what I mean except I tell you first what he was preaching about. His text was : *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden ;*—a common enough text, you know, Poldie ! but somehow it seemed fresh to him, and he made it look fresh to me, for I felt as if it hadn't been intended for preaching about at all, but for going straight into people's hearts its own self without any sermon. I think the way he did it was this : he first made us feel the sort of person that said the words, and then made us feel that he *did* say them, and so made us want to see what they could really mean. But of course what made them so different to me was"—here Helen did burst into tears, but she fought with her sobs and went on—"was—was—that my heart is breaking for you, Poldie—for I shall never see you smile again, my darling !"

She buried her face on his pillow and Leopold uttered "a great and exceeding bitter cry." Her hand was on his mouth instantly, and her sobs ceased while the tears kept flowing down her white face.

"Just think, Poldie," she said, in a voice which she seemed to have borrowed in her need from some one

else—"just think a moment! What if there should be some help in the great wide universe somewhere, for—as wide as it is—a heart that feels for us both, as my heart feels for you, Poldie! Oh! oh! wouldn't it be grand! Wouldn't it be lovely to be at peace again, Poldie? If there should be somebody somewhere who could take this gnawing serpent from my heart!"—She pulled wildly at her dress.—"'Come unto me,' he said, '*all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*' That's what he said:—oh! if it could be true!"

"Surely it is—for you, best of sisters!" cried Leopold; "but what has it to do with me? Nothing. She is *dead*—I killed her. Even if God were to raise her to life again, *he* could not make it that I didn't drive the knife into her heart! Give *me* rest!—why there's the hand that did it! O my God! my God!" cried the poor youth, and stared at his thin, wasted hand, through which the light shone red, as at a conscious evil thing that had done the deed, and was still stained with its signs.

"God *can't* be very angry with you, Poldie," sobbed Helen, feeling about blindly in the dark forest of her thoughts for some herb of comfort, and offering any leaf upon which her hand fell first.

"Then he ain't fit to be God!" cried Leopold fiercely. "I wouldn't have a word to say to a God that didn't cut a man in pieces for such a deed! O Helen, she was so lovely!—and what is she now!"

"Surely if there were a God, he would do something to set it right somehow! I know if I was God, Poldie,

I should find some way of setting you up again, my darling. You ain't half as bad as you make yourself out."

"You had better tell that to the jury, Helen, and see how they will take it," said Leopold contemptuously.

"The jury!" Helen almost screamed. What do you mean, Poldie?"

"Well!" returned Leopold, in a tone of justification, but made no further answer to her question. "All God can do to set it right," he resumed, after a pause, "is to damn me for ever and ever as one of the blackest creatures in creation."

"*That* I don't believe, anyhow!" returned Helen with equal vehemence and indefiniteness.

And for the first time, George Bascombe's teachings were a comfort to her. It was all nonsense about a God. As to her brother's misery, it had no source but that to which Shakspeare attributed the misery of Macbeth—and who should know better than Shakspeare?—the fear, namely, of people doing the like to himself!—But straightway thereupon—horrible thought!—she found herself—yes! it was *in* her—call it thought or call it feeling, it was hers!—she found herself despising her poor crushed brother! disgusted with him! turning from him, not even in scorn of his weakness, but in anger at what he had brought upon her!—It was but a flash of the lightning of hell: one glance of his great, troubled, appealing, yet hopeless eyes, vague with the fogs that steamed up from the Phlegethon within him, was enough to turn her anger at him into hate of herself who had stabbed his angel in her heart. Then in herself

she knew that all murderers are not of Macbeth's order, and that all remorse is not for oneself.

But where was the God to be found who could and *might* help in the wretched case? How were they to approach him? Or what could he do for them? Were such a being to assure Leopold that no hurt should come to him—even that he thought little of the wrong that he had done, would that make his crushed heart begin to swell again with fresh life? would that bring back Emmeline from the dark grave and the worms to the sunny earth and the speech of men? And whither, yet farther, he might have sent her, she dared not think. And Leopold was not merely at strife with himself, but condemned to dwell with a self that was loathsome to him. She no longer saw any glimmer of hope but such as lay in George's doctrine of death. If there was no helper who could clean hearts and revive the light of life, then welcome gaunt death! let the grim-mouthed skeleton be crowned at every feast!

CHAPTER L.

LET US PRAY.



HAT was the sole chink in the prison where these two sat immured alone from their kind—except, indeed, the curate might know of another.

One thing Helen had ground for being certain of—that the curate would tell them no more than he knew. Even George Bascombe, who did not believe one thing he said, counted him an honest man! Might she venture to consult him, putting the case as of a person who had done very wrong—say stolen money or committed forgery or something? Might she not thus gather a little honey of comfort and bring it home to Leopold?

Thinking thus and thus she sat silent; and all the time the suffering eyes were fixed upon her face, looking for no comfort, but finding there all they ever had of rest.

“Are you thinking about the sermon, Helen?” he asked. “What was it you were telling me about it just now? Who preached it?”

“Mr. Wingfold,” she answered listlessly.

“Who is Mr. Wingfold?”

“Our curate at the Abbey?”

“What sort of man is he?”

“Oh, a man somewhere about thirty—a straightforward, ordinary kind of man”

“Ah!” said Leopold—then added after a moment—
“I was hoping he might be an old man, with a gray head, like the brahmin who used to teach me Sanscrit.—I wish I had treated him better, poor old fellow! and learned a little more.”

“What does it matter about Sanscrit! Why should you make troubles of trifles?” said Helen, whose trials had at last begun to undermine her temper.

“It was not of the Sanscrit, but the moonshee I was thinking,” answered Leopold, mildly.

“You darling!” cried Helen, already repentant. But with the revulsion she felt that this state of things could not long continue—she must either lose her senses, or turn into something hateful to herself; the strain was more than she could bear. She *must* speak to somebody, and she would try whether she could not approach the subject with Mr. Wingfold.

But how was she to see him? It would be awkward to call upon him at his lodgings, and she must see him absolutely alone to dare a whisper of what was on her mind.

As she thus reflected, the thought of what people would say, were it remarked that she contrived to meet the curate, brought a shadow of scorn upon her face.

Leopold saw the expression, and, sensitive as an ailing woman, said: "Helen, what *have* I done to make you look like that?"

"How did I look, my Poldie," she asked, turning on him eyes like brimming wells of love and tenderness.

"Let me see," answered Leopold; and after a moment's thought replied, "as Milton's Satan might have looked if Mammon had counselled him to make off with the crown-jewels instead of declaring war."

"Ah, Poldie!" cried Helen, delighted at the stray glance of sunshine, and kissing him as she spoke, "you must really be getting better!—I'll tell you what!" she exclaimed joyfully, as a new thought struck her: "As soon as you are able, we will set out for New-York—to pay uncle Tom a visit of course! but we shall never be seen or heard of again. At New-York we will change our names, cross to San Francisco, and from there sail for the Sandwich Islands. Perhaps we may be able to find a little one to buy, just big enough for us two; and you shall marry a nice native,——"

Her forced gaiety gave way. She burst out weeping afresh, and throwing her arms round him, sobbed—

"Poldie, Poldie! you can pray: cry to God to help us somehow or other; and if there be no God to hear us, then let us die together. There are easy ways of it, Poldie."

"Thank you! thank you, sister dear!" he answered, pressing her to his bosom: "that is the first word of real comfort you have spoken to me. I shall not be afraid if you go with me."

It was indeed a comfort to both of them to remember that there was this alternative equally to the gallows and a long life of gnawing fear and remorse. But it was only to be a last refuge of course. Helen withdrew to the dressing-room, laid herself on her bed, and began to compass how to meet and circumvent the curate, so as by an innocent cunning to wile from him on false pretences what spiritual balm she might so gain for the torn heart and conscience of her brother. There was no doubt it would be genuine, and the best to be had, seeing George Bascombe, who was honesty itself, judged the curate an honest man. But how was it to be done? She could only see one way. With some inconsistency, she resolved to cast herself upon his generosity, and yet would not trust him entirely.

She did not go down stairs again, but had her tea with her brother. In the evening her aunt went out to visit some of her pensioners, for it was one of Mrs. Ramshorn's clerical duties to be kind to the poor—a good deal at their expense, I am afraid—and presently George came to the door of the sick-room and begged her to go down and sing to him. Of course, in the house of a dean's relict, no music except sacred must be heard on a Sunday; but to have Helen sing it, George would condescend even to a hymn tune; and there was Handel, for whom he professed a great admiration! What mattered his subjects? He could but compose the sort of thing the court wanted of him, and in order to that, had to fuddle his brains first, poor fellow! So said George, at least.

That Leopold might not hear them talking outside his door, a thing which no invalid likes, Helen went down stairs with her cousin ; but although she had often sung from Handel for his pleasure, content to reproduce the bare sounds and caring nothing about the feelings both they and the words represented, she positively refused this evening to gratify him. She must go back to Leopold. She would sing from *The Creation* if he liked, but nothing out of *The Messiah* would she or could she sing.

Perhaps she could herself hardly have told why, but George perceived the lingering influence of the morning's sermon, and more vexed than he had ever yet been with her, for he could not endure her to cherish the least prejudice in favor of what he despised, he said he would overtake his aunt, and left the house. The moment he was gone, she went to the piano, and began to sing, *Comfort ye*. When she came to *Come unto me*, she broke down. But with sudden resolution she rose, and having opened every door between it and her brother, raised the top of the piano, and then sang, *Come unto me* as she had never sung in her life. Nor did she stop there. At the distance of six of the wide standing houses, her aunt and cousin heard her singing *Thou didst not leave*, with the tone and expression of a prophetess—of a Maenad, George said. She was still singing when he opened the door, but when they reached the drawing-room she was gone. She was kneeling beside her brother.

CHAPTER LI.

TWO LETTERS.



THE next morning as Wingfold ate his breakfast by an open window looking across the churchyard, he received a letter by the local post. It was as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Wingfold, I am about to take an unheard-of liberty, but my reasons are such as make me bold. The day may come when I shall be able to tell you them all. Meantime I hope you can help me. I want very much to ask your counsel upon a certain matter, and I can not beg you to call, for my aunt knows nothing of it. Could you contrive a suitable way of meeting? You may imagine my necessity is grievous when I thus expose myself to the possible bitterness of my own after judgment. But I must have confidence in the man who spoke as you did yesterday morning. I am, dear Mr. Wingfold, sincerely yours, Helen Lingard.

“P.S.—I shall be walking along Pine Street from our end, at eleven o'clock to-morrow.”

The curate was not taken with a great surprise. But something like fear overshadowed him at finding his sermons come back upon him thus. Was he, an unbelieving laborer, to go reaping with his blunt and broken

sickle where the corn was ripest ! But he had no time to think about that now. It was nearly ten o'clock, and she would be looking for her answer at eleven. He had not to think long, however, before he saw what seemed a suitable plan to suggest ; whereupon he wrote as follows :

“ Dear Miss Lingard, I need not say that I am entirely at your service. But I am doubtful if the only way that occurs to me will commend itself to you. I *know* what I am about to propose is safe, but you may not have sufficient confidence in my judgment to accept it as such.

“ Doubtless you have seen the two deformed persons, an uncle and niece, named Polwarth, who keep the gate of Osterfield Park. I know them well, and, strange as it may seem, I must tell you, in order that you may partake of my confidence, that whatever change you may have observed in my public work, is owing to the influence of those two, who have more faith in God than I have ever met with before. It may not be amiss to mention also that, although poor and distorted, they are of gentle blood as well as noble nature. With this preamble, I venture to propose that you should meet me at their cottage. To them it would not appear at all strange that one of my congregation should wish to see me alone, and I know you may trust their discretion. But while I write thus with all confidence in you and in them, I must tell you that I have none in myself. I feel both ashamed and perplexed that you should imagine any help in me. Of all I know, I am the poorest creature to give counsel. All I can say for myself is,

that I think I see a glimmer of light, and light is light through whatever cranny, and into whatever poverty-stricken chamber it may fall. Whatever I see, I will say. If I can see nothing to help you, I will be silent. And yet I may be able to direct you where to find what I can not give you. If you accept my plan, and will appoint day and hour, I shall acquaint the Polwarths with the service we desire of them. Should you object to it, I shall try to think of another. I am, dear Miss Lingard, yours very truly, Thomas Wingfold."

He placed the letter between the pages of a pamphlet, took his hat and stick, and was walking down Pine Street as the Abbey clock struck eleven. Midway he met Helen, shook hands with her, and after an indifferent word or two, gave her the pamphlet, and bade her good morning.

Helen hurried home. It had required all her self-command to look him in the face, and her heart beat almost painfully as she opened the letter.

She could not but be pleased—even more than pleased with it. If the secret had been her own, she thought she could have trusted him entirely, but she must not expose poor Leopold.

By the next post, the curate received a grateful answer, appointing the time, and expressing perfect readiness to trust those whom he had tried.

She was received at the cottage-door by Rachel, who asked her to walk into the garden, where Mr. Wingfold was expecting her. The curate led her to a seat overgrown with honeysuckle.

CHAPTER LII.

ADVICE IN THE DARK.



IT was some moments before either of them spoke, and it did not help Wingfold that she sat clouded by a dark-colored veil. At length he said,

“You must not fear to trust me because I doubt my ability to help you. I can at least assure you of my sympathy. The trouble I have myself had, enables me to promise you that.”

“Can you tell me,” she said, from behind more veils than that of lace, “how to get rid of a haunting idea?”

“That depends on the nature of the idea, I should imagine,” answered the curate. “Such things sometimes arise merely from the state of the health, and there the doctor is the best help.”

Helen shook her head, and smiled behind her veil a grievous smile. The curate paused, but receiving no assistance, ventured on again.

“If it be a thought of something past and gone, for which nothing can be done, I think activity in one’s daily work must be the best aid to endurance.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” sighed Helen, “—when one has no heart to endure, and hates the very sunlight!—You wouldn’t talk about work to a man dying of hunger, would you?”

“I’m not sure about that.”

“He wouldn’t heed you.”

“Perhaps not.”

“What would you do then?”

“Give him some food, and try him again, I think.”

“Then give me some food—some hope, I mean, and try me again. Without that, I don’t care about duty or life or any thing.”

“Tell me then what is the matter: I *may* be able to hint at some hope,” said Wingfold very gently. “Do you call yourself a Christian?”

The question would to most people have sounded strange, abrupt, inquisitorial; but to Helen it sounded not one of them all.

“No,” she answered.

“Ah!” said the curate a little sadly, and went on. “Because then I could have said, you know where to go for comfort. Might it not be well however to try if there is any to be had from him that said *Come unto me and I will give you rest?*”

“I can do nothing with that. I have tried and tried to pray, but it is of no use. There is such a weight on my heart that no power of mine can lift it up. I suppose it is because I can not believe there is any one hearing a word I say. Yesterday, when I got alone in the park, I prayed aloud; I thought that perhaps even if he might

not be able to read what was in my heart, he might be able to hear my voice. I was even foolish enough to wish that I knew Greek, because perhaps he would understand me better if I were to pray in Greek. My brain seems turning. It is no use! There is no help any where!"

She tried hard but could not prevent a sob. And then came a burst of tears.

"Will you not tell me something about it?" said the curate, yet more gently. Oh, how gladly would he relieve her heart if he might! "Perhaps Jesus has begun to give you help, though you do not know it yet," he said. "His help may be on the way to you, or even with you, only you do not recognize it for what it is. I have known that kind of thing. Tell me some fact or some feeling I can lay hold of. Possibly there is something you ought to do and are not doing, and that is why you can not rest. I think Jesus would give no rest except in the way of learning of him."

Helen's sobs ceased, but what appeared to the curate a long silence followed. A length she said, with faltering voice:

"Suppose it were a great wrong that had been done, and that was the unendurable thought? *Suppose*, I say, that was what made me miserable?"

"Then you must of course make all possible reparation," answered Wingfold at once.

"But if none were possible—what then?"

Here the answer was not so plain and the curate had to think.

“At least,” he said at length, “you could confess the wrong, and ask forgiveness.”

“But if that were also impossible,” said Helen, shuddering inwardly to find how near she drew to the edge of the awful fact.

Again the curate took time to reply.

“I am endeavoring to answer your questions as well as I can,” he said; but it is hard to deal with generalities. You see how useless, for that very reason, my answers have as yet been! Still I have something more to say, and hesitate only because it may imply more confidence than I dare profess, and of all things I dread untruth. But I am honest in this much at least, that I desire with true heart to find a God who will acknowledge me as his creature and make me his child, and if there be any God I am nearly certain he will do so; for surely there can not be any other kind of God than the Father of Jesus Christ! In the strength of this much of conscious truth I venture to say—that no crime can be committed against a creature without being committed also against the creator of that creature; therefore surely the first step for any one who has committed such a crime must be to humble himself before God, confess the sin, and ask forgiveness and cleansing. If there is any thing in religion at all it must rest upon an actual individual communication between God and the creature he has made; and if God heard the man’s prayer and forgave him, then the man would certainly know it in his heart and be consoled—perhaps by the gift of humility.”

“Then you think confession to God is all that is required?”

“If there be no one else wronged to whom confession can be made. If the case were mine—and sometimes I much fear that in taking holy orders I have grievously sinned—I should then do just as I have done with regard to that—cry to the living power which I think originated me, to set the matter right for me.”

“But if it could not be set right?”

“Then to forgive and console me.”

“Alas! alas! that he will not hear of. He would rather be punished than consoled. I fear for his brain. But indeed that might be well.”

She had gone much farther than she had intended; but the more doubtful help became, the more was she driven by the agony of a perishing hope to search the heart of Wingfold.

Again the curate pondered.

“Are you sure,” he said at length, “that the person of whom you speak is not neglecting something he ought to do—something he knows, perhaps?”

He had come back to the same with which he had started.

Through her veil he saw her turn deadly white. Ever since Leopold said the word *jury*, a ghastly fear had haunted Helen. She pressed her hand on her heart and made no answer.

“I speak from experience,” the curate went on, “from what else could I speak? I know that so long as we hang back from doing what conscience urges, there

is no peace for us. I will not say our prayers are not heard, for Mr. Polwarth has taught me that the most precious answer prayer can have lies in the growing strength of the impulse towards the dreaded duty, and in the ever sharper stings of the conscience. I think I asked already whether there were no relatives to whom reparation could be made?"

"Yes, yes;" gasped Helen, "and I told you reparation was impossible."

Her voice had sunk almost to a groan.

"But at least confession—" said Wingfold—and started from his seat.

CHAPTER LIII.

INTERCESSION.



STIFLED cry had interrupted him. Helen was pressing her handkerchief to her mouth. She rose and ran from him. Wingfold stood alarmed and irresolute. She had not gone many steps, however, when her pace slackened, her knees gave way, and she dropped senseless on the grass. Wingfold ran to the house for water. Rachel hastened to her assistance, and Polwarth followed. It was some time before they succeeded in reviving her.

When at length the color began to return a little to her cheek, Polwarth dropped on his knees at her feet. Wingfold in his ministrations was already kneeling on one side of her, and Rachel now kneeled on the other. Then Polwarth said, in his low and husky, yet not altogether unmelodious voice,

“Life eternal, this lady of thine hath a sore heart and we can not help her. Thou art Help, O mighty love. They who know thee best rejoice in thee most. As thy sun that shines over our heads, as thy air that flows into our bodies, thou art above, around, and in us ;

thou art in her heart ; oh, speak to her there ; let her know thy will, and give her strength to do it, O Father of Jesus Christ ! Amen."

When Helen opened her eyes, she saw only the dark leaves of an arbutus over her, and knew nothing beyond a sense of utter misery and weakness, with an impulse to rise and run. With an effort she moved her head a little, and then she saw the three kneeling forms, the clergyman with bowed head, and the two dwarfs with shining upturned faces ; she thought she was dead and they were kneeling about her corpse. Her head dropped with a weary sigh of relief, she lay passive, and heard the dwarf's prayer. Then she knew that she was not dead, and the disappointment was bitter. But she thought of Leopold, and was consoled. After a few minutes of quiet, they helped her into the house, and laid her on a sofa in the parlor.

"Don't be frightened dear lady," said the little woman ; "nobody shall come near you. We will watch you as if you were the queen. I am going to get some tea for you."

But the moment she left the room, Helen got up. She could not endure a moment longer in the place. There was a demon at her brother's ear, whispering to him to confess, to rid himself of his torture by the aid of the law ; she must rush home and drive him away. She took her hat in her hand, opened the door softly, and ere Rachel could say a word, had flitted through the kitchen, and was amongst the trees on the opposite side of the road. Rachel ran to the garden to her father and

Wingfold. They looked at each other for a moment in silence.

"I will follow her," said Wingfold. "She may faint again. If she does I shall whistle."

He followed, and kept her in sight until she was safe in her aunt's garden.

"What *is* to be done?" he said, returning in great trouble. "I do not think I made any blunder, but there she is gone in tenfold misery! I wish I could tell you what passed, but that of course I can not."

"Of course not," returned Polwarth. "But the fact of her leaving you so is no sign that you said the wrong thing,—rather the contrary. When people seek advice, it is too often in the hope of finding the adviser side with their second familiar self, instead of their awful first self, of which they know so little. Do not be anxious. You have done your best. Wait for what will come next."

CHAPTER LIV.

HELEN ALONE.

HELEN tottered to a little summer-house in the garden, which had been her best retreat since she had given her room to her brother, and there seated herself to regain breath and composure ere she went to him. She had sought the door of Paradise, and the door of hell had been opened to her! If the frightful idea which, she did not doubt, had already suggested itself to Leopold, should now be encouraged, there was nothing but black madness before her! Her Poldie on the scaffold! God in heaven! Infinitely rather would she poison herself and him! Then she remembered how pleased and consoled he had been when she said something about their dying together, and that reassured her a little: no; she was certain Leopold would never yield himself to public shame! But she must take care that foolish, extravagant curate should not come near him! There was no knowing to what he might persuade him! Poor Poldie was so easily led by any show of nobility—any thing that looked grand or self-sacrificing!

Helen's only knowledge of guilt came from the pale image of it lifted above her horizon by the refraction of her sympathy. She did not know, perhaps never would understand, the ghastly horror of conscious guilt, beside which there is no evil else. Agonies of injury a man may endure, and, so far from being overwhelmed, rise above them tenfold a man, who, were he to awake to the self-knowledge of a crime, would sink into a heap of ruin. Then, indeed, if there be no God, or one that has not an infinite power of setting right that which has gone wrong with his work, then indeed welcome the faith, for faith it may then be called, of such as say there is no hereafter! Helen did not know to what gulfs of personal shame, nay, to what summits of public execration, a man may be glad to flee for refuge from the fangs of home-born guilt—if so be there is any refuge to be found in either. And some kind of refuge there does seem to be. Strange it is and true, that in publicity itself lies some relief from the gnawing of the worm—as if even a cursing humanity were a barrier of protection between the torn soul and its crime. It flees to its kind for shelter from itself. Hence, I imagine, in part, may the coolness of some criminals be accounted for. Their quietness is the relief brought by confession—even confession but to their fellows. Is it that the crime seems then lifted a little from their shoulders, and its weight shared by the race?

Helen had hoped that the man who had spoken in public so tenderly, and at the same time so powerfully, of the saving heart of the universe, that would have no

divisions of pride, no scatterings of hate, but of many would make one, would in private have spoken yet sweeter words of hope and consolation, which she might have carried home in gladness to her sick-souled brother, to comfort and strengthen him—words of might to allay the burning of the poison within him, and make him feel that after all there was yet a place for him in the universe, and that he was no outcast of Gehenna. But instead of such words of gentle might, like those of the man of whom he was so fond of talking, he had only spoken drearily of duty, hinting at a horror that would plunge the whole ancient family into a hell of dishonor and contempt! It did indeed show what mere heartless windbags of effete theology those priests were! Skeletons they were, and no human beings at all!—Her father!—the thought of him was distraction! Her mother! Oh, if Leopold had had her mother for his too, instead of the dark-skinned woman with the flashing eyes, he would never have brought this upon them! It was all his mother's fault—the fault of her race—and of the horrible drug her people had taught him to take! And was he to go and confess it, and be tried for it, and be——? Great God!—And here was the priest actually counselling what was worse than any suicide!

Suddenly, however, it occurred to her that the curate had had no knowledge of the facts of the case, and had therefore been compelled to talk at random. It was impossible he should suspect the crime of which her brother had been guilty, and therefore could not know the frightful consequences of such a confession as he had

counselled. Had she not better then tell him all, and so gather from him some right and reasonable advice for the soothing of the agonies of her poor broken-winged angel? But alas! what security had she that a man capable of such priestly severity and heartlessness—her terrors made her thus inconsequent—would not himself betray the all but innocent sufferer to the vengeance of justice so-called? No; she would venture no further. Sooner would she go to George Bascombe—from whom she not only could look for no spiritual comfort, but whose theories were so cruel against culprits of all sorts! Alas, alas! she was alone! absolutely alone in the great waste, death-eyed universe!—But for a man to talk so of the tenderness of Jesus Christ and then serve her as the curate had done—it was indeed shameless! *He* would never have treated a poor wretched woman like that!—And as she said thus to herself, again the words sounded in the ear of her heart: “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*” Whence came the voice? From her memory, or from that inner chamber of the spirit which the one spirit-bearing spirit keeps for his own in every house that he builds—alas so long in most human houses shut away from the rest of the rooms and forgotten, or recollected with uneasiness, as a lumber-closet in which lie too many things that had better not be looked into? But what matter where the voice that said them, so long as the words were true, and she might believe them!—whatever is true *can* be believed of the true heart.

¶ Ere she knew, Helen was on her knees, with her

head on the chair, yet once more crying to the hearer of cries—possible or impossible being she knew not in the least, but words reported of him had given birth to the cry—to help her in her dire need.

Instead of any word, or thought even, coming to her that might be fancied an answer, she was scared from her knees by an approaching step—that of the housekeeper come to look for her with the message from her aunt that Leopold was more restless than usual, not at all like himself, and she could do nothing with him.

CHAPTER LV.

A HAUNTED SOUL.



HELEN rose and hastened to her brother, with a heart of lead in her body.

She started when she saw him ; some change had passed on him since the morning ! Was that eager look in his eyes a fresh access of the fever ? That glimmer on his countenance, doubtful as the first of the morning, when the traveller knows not whether the light be in the sky or only in his brain, did look more like a dawn of his old healthful radiance than any fresh fire of madness ; but at the same time he appeared more wasted and pinched and death-like than she had yet seen him. Or was it only in her eyes—was she but reading in his face the agony she had herself gone through that day ?

“Helen, Helen ;” he cried as she entered the room, “come here, close to me.”

She hastened to him, sat down on the bedside, took his hand and looked as cheerfully as she could, yet it was but the more woefully, in his face.

“Helen,” he said again, and he spoke with a strange expression in his voice, for it seemed that of hope, “I have been thinking all day of what you told me on Sunday !”

“What was that, Poldie !” asked Helen with a pang of fear.

“Why, those words of course—what else ! You sang them to me afterwards, you know. Helen, I should like to see Mr. Wingfold. Don’t you think he might be able to do something ?”

“What sort of thing, Poldie ?” she faltered, growing sick at heart.—Was this what came of praying ! she thought bitterly.

“Something or other—I don’t know what exactly,” returned Leopold.—“Oh Helen !” he broke out with a cry, stifled by the caution that had grown habitual to both of them, “is there no help of any kind anywhere ? Surely Mr. Wingfold could tell me something—comfort me somehow, if I were to tell him all about it ! I could trust the man that said such things as those you told me. That I could !—Oh ! I wish I hadn’t run away, but had let them take me and hang me !”

Helen felt herself growing white. She turned away and pretended to search for something she had dropped.

“I don’t think he would be of the slightest use to you,” she said, still stooping.

And she felt like a devil dragging the soul of her brother to hell. But that was a foolish fancy, and must be resisted !

“Not if I told him everything ?” Leopold hissed from

between his teeth in the struggle to keep down a shriek.

"No, not if you told him everything," she answered, and felt like a judge condemning him to death.

"What is he there for then?" said Leopold indignantly, and turned his face to the wall and moaned.

Helen had not yet thought of asking herself whether her love to her brother was all clear love, and nowise mingled with selfishness—whether in the fresh horror that day poured into the cup that had seemed already running over, it was of her brother only she thought, or whether threatened shame to herself had not a part in her misery. But as far as she was aware, she was quite honest in saying that the curate could not comfort him—for what attempt even had he made to comfort her? What had he done but utter commonplaces and truisms about duty? And who could tell but—indeed was she not certain that such a man, bringing the artillery of his fanaticism to bear upon her poor boy's wild, enthusiastic temperament, would speedily persuade him to make a reality of that terrible thing he had already thought of, that hideously impossible possibility which she dared not even allow to present itself before her imagination? So he lay and moaned, and she sat crushed and speechless with despairing misery.

All at once Leopold sat straight up, his eyes fixed and flaming, his face white: he looked like a corpse possessed by a spirit of fear and horror. Helen's heart swelled into her throat, the muscles of her face contracted with irresistible rigor, and she felt it grow ex-

actly like his, while with wide eyes she stared at him, and he stared at something which lest she also should see, she dared not turn her head. Surely, she thought afterwards, she must have been at that moment in the presence of something unearthly ! Her physical being was wrenched from her control, and she must simply sit and wait until the power or influence, whichever it might be, should pass away. How long it was ere it relaxed its hold she could not tell ; it could not have been long, she thought. Suddenly the light sank from Leopold's eyes, his muscles relaxed, he fell back motionless, apparently senseless, on the pillow, and she thought he was dead. The same moment she was free ; the horror had departed from her own atmosphere too, and she made haste to restore him. But in all she did for him, she felt like the executioner who gives restoratives to the wretch that has fainted on the rack or the wheel. What right had *she*, she thought, to multiply on him his moments of torture ? If the cruel power that had created him for such misery, whoever, whatever, wherever he might be, chose thus to torture him, was she, his only friend, out of the selfish affection he had planted in her, to lend herself his tool ? Yet she hesitated not a single moment in her ministrations.

There is so much passes in us of which our consciousness takes no grasp,—or but with such a flitting touch as scarcely to hand it over to the memory—that I feel encouraged to doubt whether ever there was a man absolutely without hope. That there have been, alas are many, who are aware of no ground of hope, nay even

who feel no glimmer in them of any thing they can call hope, I know ; but I think in them all is an underlying unconscious hope. I think that not one in all the world has more than a shadowy notion of what hopelessness means. Perhaps utter hopelessness is the outer darkness.

At length Leopold opened his eyes, gave a terrified glance around, held out his arms to her, and drew her down upon his face.

"I saw her !" he said, in a voice that sounded as if it came from the grave, and she heard it in her heart.

"Nonsense, dear Poldie ! it was all fancy—nothing more," she returned, in a voice almost as hollow as his ; and the lightness of the words uttered in such a tone jarred dismally on her own ear.

"Fancy !" he repeated; "I know what fancy is as well as any man or woman born : *that* was no fancy. She stood there, by the wardrobe—in the same dress!—her face as white as her dress ! And—listen !—I will tell *you*—I will soon satisfy you it *could* be no fancy."—Here he pushed her from him and looked straight in her eyes.—"I saw her back reflected in the mirror of the wardrobe door, and"—here the fixed look of horror threatened to return upon his face, but he went on—"listen,—there was a worm crawling on it, over her lovely white shoulder ! Ugh ! I saw it in the mirror !"

His voice had risen to a strangled shriek, his face was distorted, and he shook like a child on the point of yelling aloud in an agony of fear. Helen clasped his face between her hands, and gathering courage from

despair, if indeed that be a possible source of courage, and it is not gathered rather from the hidden hope of which I speak, and the love that will cleave and not forsake, she set her teeth and said :

“ Let her come then, Poldie ! I am with you and I defy her ! She shall know that a sister’s love is stronger than the hate of a jilt—even if you did kill her. Before God, Poldie, I would after all rather be you than she. Say what you will, she had herself to blame, and I don’t doubt did twenty worse things than you did when you killed her.”

But Leopold seemed not to hear a word she said, and lay with his face to the wall.

At length he turned his head suddenly, and said,

“ Helen, if you don’t let me see Mr. Wingfold, I shall go mad, and then everything will come out.”

CHAPTER LVI.

COMPELLED CONFIDENCE.



ELEN flew to the dressing-room to hide her dismay, and there cast herself on the bed. The gray fate above, or the awful Demogorgon beneath, would have its way! Whether it was a living Will or but the shadow of the events it seemed to order, it was too much for her. She had no choice but yield. She rose and returned to her brother.

"I am going to find Mr. Wingfold," she said in a hoarse voice, as she took her hat.

"Don't be long then, Helen," returned Leopold. I can't bear you out of my sight. And don't let aunt come into the room. *She* might come again, you know, and then all would be out.—Bring him with you, Helen."

"I will," answered Helen, and went.

The curate might have returned; she would seek him first at his lodging. She cared nothing about appearances now.

It was a dull afternoon. Clouds had gathered, and the wind was chilly. It seemed to blow out of the church

which stood up cold and gray against the sky, filling the end of the street. What a wretched, horrible world it was! She approached the church, and entered the churchyard from which it rose like a rock from the Dead Sea, a type of the true church, around whose walls lie the dead bodies of the old selves left behind by those who enter. Helen would have envied the dead, who lay so still under its waves; but alas! if Leopold was right, they but roamed elsewhere in their trouble, and were no better for dying.

She hurried across, and reached the house, but Mr. Wingfold had not yet returned, and she hurried back across it again to tell Leopold that she must go farther to find him.

The poor youth was already more composed: what will not the vaguest hope sometimes do for a man! Helen told him she had seen the curate in the park, when she was out in the morning, and he might be there still, or she might meet him coming back. Leopold only begged her to make haste. She took the road to the lodge.

She did not meet him, and it was with intense repugnance that she approached the gate.

"Is Mr. Wingfold here?" she asked of Rachel, as if she had never spoken to her before; and Rachel, turning paler at the sight of her, answered that he was in the garden with her uncle, and went to call him.

The moment he appeared, she said, in a tone rendered by conflicting emotions inexplicable, and sounding almost rude.

“Will you come to my brother? He is very ill, and wants to see you.”

“Certainly,” returned Wingfold, “I will go with you at once.”

But in his heart he trembled at the thought of being looked to for consolation and counsel—and that apparently in a case of no ordinary kind. Most likely he would not know what to say or how to behave himself! How different it would be if with all his heart he believed the grand lovely things recorded in the book of his profession! Then indeed he might enter the chambers of sin and fear and guilt with the innocent confidence of a winged angel of comfort and healing! But now the eyes of his understanding were blinded with the *ifs* and *buts* that flew swarming like black *muscæ* wherever they turned. Still he would, nay, he *must* go and do his best.

They walked across the park to reach the house by the garden, and for some distance they walked in silence. At length, Helen said:

“You must not encourage my brother to talk much, if you please; and you must not mind what he says: he has had brain fever, and sometimes talks strangely. But on the other hand if he fancies you don’t believe him, it will drive him wild—so you must take care—please?”

Her voice was like that of a soul trying to speak with unproved lips.

“Miss Lingard,” said Wingfold, slowly and quietly—and if his voice trembled, he only was aware of it, “I

can not see your face, therefore you must pardon me if I ask you—are you quite honest with me?”

Helen's first feeling was anger. She held her peace for a time. Then she said,

“So, Mr. Wingfold!—that is the way you help the helpless!”

“How can any man help without knowing what has to be helped?” returned the curate. “The very being of his help depends upon his knowing the truth. It is very plain you do not trust me, and equally impossible I should be of any service so long as the case is such.”

Again Helen held her peace. Resentment and dislike towards himself combined with terror of his anticipated counsel to render her speechless.

Her silence lasted so long that Wingfold came to the resolution of making a venture that had occurred to him more than once that morning. Had he not been convinced that a soul was in dire misery, he would not have had recourse to the seeming cruelty.

“Would this help to satisfy you that, whatever my advice may be worth, at least my discretion may be trusted!” he said.

They were at the moment passing through a little thicket in the park, where nobody could see them, and as he spoke, he took the knife-sheath from his pocket, and held it out to her.

She started like a young horse at something dead: she had never seen it, but the shape had an association. She paled, retreated a step, with a drawing back of her

head and neck and a spreading of her nostrils, stared for a moment, first at the sheath, then at the curate, gave a little moan, bit her under lip hard, held out her hand, but as if she were afraid to touch the thing, and said

“What is it? Where did you find it?”

She would have taken it, but Wingfold held it fast.

“Give it to me,” she said imperatively. “It is mine. I lost it.”

“There is something dark on the lining of it,” said the curate, and looked straight into her eyes.

She let go her hold. But almost the same moment she snatched the sheath out of his hand and held it to her bosom, while her look of terror changed into one of defiance. Wingfold made no attempt to recover it. She put it in her pocket, and drew herself up.

“What do you mean?” she said, in a voice that was hard, yet trembled.

She felt like one that sees the vultures above him, and lifts a one movable finger in defence. Then with sudden haughtiness both of gesture and word:

“You have been acting the spy, sir!”

“No,” returned the curate quietly. “The sheath was committed to my care by one whom certain facts that had come to his knowledge—certain words he had overheard—”

He paused. She shook visibly, but still would hold what ground might yet be left her.

“Why did you not give it me before?” she asked.

“In the public street, or in your aunt’s presence?”

"You are cruel!" she panted. Her strength was going. "What do you know?"

"Nothing so well as that I want to serve you, and you may trust me."

"What do you mean to do?"

"My best to help you and your brother."

"But to what end?"

"To any end that is right."

"But how? What would you tell him to do?"

"You must help me to discover what he ought to do."

"Not—" she cried, clasping her hands and dropping on her knees before him, "—you *will* not tell him to give himself up? Promise me you will not, and I will tell you everything. He shall do any thing you please but that! Any thing but that!"

Wingfold's heart was sore at sight of her agony. He would have raised her with soothing words of sympathy and assurance, but still she cried, "Promise me you will not make him give himself up."

"I dare not promise anything," he said. "I *must* do what I may see to be right. Believe me, I have no wish to force myself into your confidence, but you have let me see that you are in great trouble and in need of help, and I should be unfaithful to my calling if I did not do my best to make you trust me."

A pause followed. Helen rose despairingly, and they resumed their walk. Just as they reached the door in the fence which would let them out upon the meadow in sight of the Manor-house, she turned to him and said.

"I will trust you, Mr. Wingfold. I mean, I will take

you to my brother, and he shall do as he thinks proper."

They passed out and walked across the meadow in silence. In the passage under the fence, as she turned from closing the door behind them, she stood and pressed her hand to her side.

"O Mr. Wingfold," she cried, "my heart will break! He has no one but me! No one but me to be mother and sister and all to him! He is *not* wicked, my poor darling!"

She caught the curate by the arm with a grasp which left its mark behind it, and gazed appealingly into his face; in the dim tomb-like light, her wide-strained eyes, white agonized countenance, and trembling, roseless lips, made her look like one called back from death "to speak of horrors."

"Save him from madness," she said, in forced and unnatural utterance. "Save him from the remorse gnawing at his heart. But do not, *do* not counsel him to give himself up."

"Would it not be better you should tell me about it," said the curate, "and save him the pain and excitement?"

"I will do so, if he wishes it, not otherwise.—Come; we must not stay longer. He can hardly bear me out of his sight. I will leave you for one moment in the library, and then come to you. If you should see my aunt, not a word of all this, please. All she knows is that he has had brain-fever and is recovering only very slowly. I have never given her even a hint of any thing worse. Indeed, honestly, Mr. Wingfold, I am not certain at all

he did do what he will tell you. But there is his misery all the same. Do have pity on us, and don't be hard upon the poor boy. He is but a boy—only twenty."

"May God be to me as I am to him!" said Wingfold solemnly.

Helen withdrew her entreating eyes, and let go his arm. They went up into the garden and into the house.

Afterwards, Wingfold was astonished at his own calmness and decision in taking upon him—almost, as it were, dragging to him—this relation with Helen and her brother. But he had felt that not to do so would be to abandon Helen to her grief, and that for her sake he must not hesitate to encounter whatever might have to be encountered in doing so.

Helen left him in the library, as she had said, and there he waited her return in a kind of stupor, unable to think, and feeling as if he were lost in a strange and anxious dream.

CHAPTER LVII.

WILLING CONFIDENCE.



OME," said Helen, re-entering, and the curate rose and followed her.

The moment he turned the corner of the bed and saw the face on the pillow, he knew in his soul that Helen was right, and that that was no wicked youth who lay before him—one, however, who might well have been passion-driven. There was the dark complexion and the great soft yet wild eyes that came of tropical blood. Had not Helen so plainly spoken of her brother, however, he would have thought he saw before him a woman. The worn, troubled, appealing light that overflowed rather than shone from his eyes, went straight to the curate's heart.

Wingfold had had a brother, the only being in the world he had ever loved tenderly; he had died young, and a thin film of ice had since gathered over the well of his affections; but now suddenly this ice broke and vanished, and his heart yearned over the suffering youth. He had himself been crying to God, not seldom in sore

trouble, and now, ere, as it seemed, he had himself been heard, here was a sad brother crying to him for help. Nor was this all: the reading of the gospel story had roused in his heart a strange, yet most natural longing after the face of that man of whom he read such lovely things, and thence, unknown to himself, had come a reverence and a love for his kind, which now first sprung awake to his consciousness in the feeling that drew him towards Leopold.

Softly he approached the bed, his face full of tenderness and strong pity. The lad, weak with protracted illness and mental tortures, gave one look in his face, and stretched out his arms to him. How could the curate give him but a hand? He put his arms round him as if he had been a child.

“I knew you would come,” sobbed Lingard.

“What else could I do but come?” returned Wingfold.

“I have seen you somewhere before,” said Lingard
“—in one of my dreams, I suppose”

Then, sinking his voice to a whisper, he added:

“Do you know you came in close behind *her*? She looked round and saw you, and vanished!”

Wingfold did not even try to guess at his meaning.

“Hush, my dear fellow,” he said, “I must not let you talk wildly, or the doctor might forbid my seeing you.”

“I am not talking a bit wildly,” returned Leopold.
“I am as quiet as a mountain-top. Ah! when I *am* wild—if you saw me then, you might say so!”

Wingfold sat down on the side of the bed, and took the thin, hot hand next him in his own firm, cool one.

“Come now,” he said, “tell me all about it. Or shall your sister tell me?—Come here, please, Miss Lingard.”

“No, no!” cried Leopold hastily; “I will tell you myself. My poor sister could not bear to tell it you. It would kill her.—But how am I to know you will not get up and walk out the moment you have a glimpse of what is coming?”

“I would as soon leave a child burning in the fire and go out and shut the door,” said Wingfold.

“You can go now, Helen.” said Lingard very quietly. “Why should you be tortured over again? You needn’t mind leaving me. Mr. Wingfold will take care of me.”

Helen left the room, with one anxious look at her brother as she went.

Without a moment’s further delay, Leopold began, and in wonderfully direct and unbroken narrative, told the sad evil tale as he had formerly told it to his sister, only more consecutively and quietly. Possibly his anxiety as to how the listener would receive it, served, by dividing him between two emotions, to keep the re-uttered tale from overpowering him with freshened vividness. All the time, he kept watching Wingfold’s face, the expressions of which the curate felt those eyes were reading like a book. He was so well prepared however, that no expression of surprise, no reflex of its ghastfulness met Leopold’s gaze, and he went on to the end without a pause even. When he had finished, both sat silent, looking in each other’s eyes, Wingfold’s beaming with compassion, and Lingard’s glimmering


with doubtful, anxious inquiry and appeal. At length Wingfold said :

“And what do you think I can do for you?”

“I don't know. I thought you could tell me something. I can not live like this! If I had but thought before I did it, and killed myself instead of her! It would have done so much better! Of course I should be in hell now, but that would be all right, and this is all wrong. I have no right to be lying here and Emmeline in her grave. I know I deserve to be miserable forever and ever, and I don't want not to be miserable—that is all right—but there is something in this wretchedness that I can not bear. Tell me something to make me able to endure my misery. That is what you can do for me. I don't want to go mad. And what is worst of all, I have made my sister miserable, and I can't bear to see it. She is wasting away with it. And besides I fancy she loves George Bascombe—and who would marry the sister of a murderer? And now she has begun to come to me again—in the daytime—I mean Emmeline!—or I have begun to see her again—I don't know which;—perhaps she is always here, only I don't always see her—and it don't much matter which. Only if other people were to see her!—While she is there, nothing could persuade me I do not see her, but afterwards I am not so sure that I did. And at night I keep dreaming the horrible thing over and over again; and the agony is to think I shall never get rid of it, and never feel clean again. To be forever and ever a murderer and people not know it is more than I *can* bear.”

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE CURATE'S COUNSEL.

 NOT seeing yet what he had to say, but knowing that scintillation the smallest is light, the curate let the talk take its natural course, and said the next thing that came to him.

“How do you feel when you think that you may yet be found out?” he asked.

“At first I was more afraid of that than of any thing else. Then after that danger seemed past, I was afraid of the life to come. That fear left me next, and now it is the thing itself that is always haunting me. I often wish they would come and take me, and deliver me from myself. It would be a comfort to have it all known, and never need to start again. I think I could even bear to see *her* in the prison. If it would annihilate the deed, or bring Emmeline back, I can not tell you how gladly I would be hanged. I would, indeed, Mr. Wingfold. I hope you will believe me, though I don't deserve it.”

“I do believe you,” said the curate, and a silence followed.

“There is but one thing I can say with confidence at this moment,” he resumed: “it is, that I am your friend, and will stand by you. But the first part of friendship sometimes is to confess poverty, and I want to tell you that of the very things concerning which I ought to know most, I know least. I have but lately begun to feel after God, and I dare not say that I have found him, but I think I know now where to find him. And I do think, if we could find him, then we should find help. All I can do for you now is only to be near you, and talk to you, and pray to God for you, that so together we may wait for what light may come.—Does any thing ever look to you as if it would make you feel better?”

“I have no right to feel better or take comfort from any thing.”

“I am not sure about that.—Do you feel any better for having me come to see you?”

“Oh yes! indeed I do!”

“Well, there is no wrong in that, is there?”

“I don't know. It seems a sneaking kind of thing: *she* has got none of it. My sister makes excuses for me, but the moment I begin to listen to them I only feel the more horrid.”

“I have said nothing of that kind to you.”

“No, sir.”

“And yet you like to have me here?”

“Yes, indeed, sir,” he answered earnestly.

“And it does not make you think less of your crime?”

"No. It makes me feel it worse than ever to see you sitting there, a clean, strong, innocent man, and think what I might have been."

"Then the comfort you get from me does you no harm, at least. If I were to find my company made you think with less hatred of your crime, I should go away that instant."

"Thank you, sir," said Leopold humbly. "O sir!" he resumed after a little silence, "to think that never more to all eternity shall I be able to think of myself as I used to think!"

"Perhaps you used to think too much of yourself," returned the curate. "For the greatest fool and rascal in creation there is yet a worse condition, and that is not to know it, but think himself a respectable man. As the event proves, though you would doubtless have laughed at the idea, you were then capable of committing a murder. I have come to see—at least, I think I have—that except a man has God dwelling in him, he may be, or may become, capable of any crime within the compass of human nature."

"I don't know any thing about God," said Leopold. "I dare say I thought I did before this happened—before I did it, I mean," he added in correction, "—but I know now that I don't, and never did."

"Ah! Leopold," said the curate, "think, if my coming to you comforts you, what would it be to have Him who made you always with you!"

"Where would be the good? I daresay he might forgive me, if I were to do this and that, but where would

be the good of it? It would not take the thing off me one bit."

"Ah! now," said Wingfold, "I fear you are thinking a little about your own disgrace and not only of the bad you have done. Why should you not be ashamed? Would you have the shame taken off you? Nay; you must humbly consent to bear it. Perhaps your shame is the hand of love washing the defilement from off you. Ah, let us keep our shame, and be made clean from the filth!"

"I don't know that I understand you, sir. What do you mean by the defilement? Is it not to have done the deed that is the defilement?"

"Is it not rather to have that in you, a part, or all but a part, of your being, that makes you capable of doing it? If you had resisted and conquered, you would have been clean from it; and now, if you repent and God comes to you, you will yet be clean. Again I say, let us keep our shame and be made clean! Shame is not defilement, though a mean pride persuades men so. On the contrary, the man who is honestly ashamed has begun to be clean."

"But what good would that do to Emmeline? It can not bring her up again to the bright world out of the dark grave."

"Emmeline is not in the dark grave."

"Where is she then?" he said with a ghastly look.

"That I can not tell. I only know that, if there be a God, she is in his hands," replied the curate.

The youth gazed in his face and made no answer.

Wingfold saw that he had been wrong in trying to comfort him with the thought of God dwelling in him. How was such a poor passionate creature to take that for a comfort? How was he to understand or prize the idea, who had his spiritual nature so all undeveloped? He would try another way.

“Shall I tell you what seems to me sometimes the one only thing I want to help me out of all my difficulties?”

“Yes, please, sir,” answered Leopold, as humbly as a child.

“I think sometimes, if I could but see Jesus for one moment,—”

“Ah!” cried Leopold, and gave a great sigh.

“You would like to see him then, would you?”

“O Mr. Wingfold!”

“What would you say to him if you saw him?”

“I don’t know. I would fall down on my face and hold his feet lest he should go away from me.”

“Do you think then he could help you?”

“Yes. He could make Emmeline alive again. He could destroy what I had done.”

“But still, as you say, the crime would remain.”

“But, as you say, he could pardon that, and make me that I would never, never sin again.”

“So you think the story about Jesus Christ is true?”

“Yes. Don’t you?” said Leopold with an amazed, half-frightened look.

“Yes, indeed I do.—Then do you remember what he said to his disciples as he left them: *I am with you al-*

ways unto the end of the world?—If that be true, then he can hear you just as well now as ever he could. And when he was in the world, he said; “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*” It is rest you want, my poor boy—not deliverance from danger or shame, but rest—such peace of mind as you had when you were a child. If he can not give you that I know not where or how it is to be had. Do not waste time in asking yourself how he can do it: that is for him to understand, not you—until it is done. Ask him to forgive you and make you clean and set things right for you. If he will not do it, then he is not the saviour of men, and was wrongly named Jesus.”

The curate rose. Leopold had hid his face. When he looked again he was gone.

CHAPTER LIX.

SLEEP.



AS Wingfold came out of the room, which was near the stair, Helen rose from the top of it, where she had been sitting all the time he had been with her brother. He closed the door gently behind him, and stepped softly along the landing. A human soul in guilt and agony is an awful presence, but there was more than that in the hush of the curate; he felt as if he had left the physician of souls behind him at the bedside; that a human being lay on the rack of the truth, but at his head stood one who watched his throes with the throbs of such a human heart as never beat in any bosom but his own, and the executioners were angels of light. No wonder if with such a feeling in his breast Wingfold walked softly, and his face glistened! He was not aware that the tears stood in his eyes, but Helen saw them.

“You know all!” she faltered.

“I do. Will you let me out by the garden again? I wish to be alone.”

She led the way down the stair, and walked with him through the garden. Wingfold did not speak.

"You don't think very badly of my poor brother, do you, Mr. Wingfold?" said Helen meekly.

"It is a terrible fate," he returned. "—I think I never saw a lovelier disposition.—I do hope his mind will soon be more composed. I think he knows where alone he can find rest.—I am well aware how foolish that of which I speak seems to some minds, Miss Lingard; but when a man is once overwhelmed in his own deeds, when they have turned into spectres to mock at him, when he loathes himself and turns with sickness from past, present, and future, I know but one choice left, and that is between the death your friend Mr. Bascombe preaches and the life preached by Jesus, the crucified Jew. Into the life I hope your brother will enter."

"I am so glad you don't hate him!"

"Hate him! Who but a demon could hate him?"

Helen lifted a grateful look from eyes that swam in tears. The terror of his possible counsel for the moment vanished. He could never tell him to give himself up!

"But, as I told you, I am a poor scholar in these high matters," resumed the curate, "and I want to bring Mr. Polwarth to see him."

"The dwarf!" exclaimed Helen, shuddering at the remembrance of what she had gone through at the cottage.

"Yes. That man's soul is as grand and beautiful and

patient as his body is insignificant and troubled. He is the wisest and best man I have ever known."

"I must ask Leopold," returned Helen, who, the better the man was represented, felt the more jealous and fearful of the advice he might give. Her love and her conscience were not yet at one with each other.

They parted at the door from the garden, and she returned to the sick-room.

She paused, hesitating to enter. All was still as the grave. She turned the handle softly and peeped in: could it be that Wingfold's bearing had communicated to her mind a shadow of the awe with which he had left the place where perhaps a soul was being born again? Leopold did not move. Terror laid hold of her heart. She stepped quickly in, and round the screen to the side of the bed. There, to her glad surprise, he lay fast asleep, with the tears not yet dried upon his face. Her heart swelled with some sense unknown before: was it rudimentary thankfulness to the Father of her spirit?

As she stood gazing with the look of a mother over her sick child, he lifted his eyelids and smiled a sad smile.

"When did you come into the room?" he said.

"A minute ago," she answered.

"I did not hear you," he returned.

"No; you were asleep."

"Not I! Mr. Wingfold is only just gone."

"I have let him out on the meadow since."

Leopold started, looked half alarmed, and then said,

"Did God make me sleep, Helen?"

She did not answer. The light of a new hope in his eye, as if the dawn had begun at last to break over the dark mountains, was already reflected from her heart.

“O Helen!” he said, “that *is* a good fellow—*such* a good fellow!”

A pang of jealousy, the first she had ever felt, shot to her heart; she had hitherto, since his trouble, been all in all to her Leopold! Had the curate been a man she liked, she would not, perhaps, have minded it so much.

“You will be able to do without me now,” she said sadly. “I never could understand taking to people at first sight!”

“Some people are made so, I suppose, Helen. I know I took to you at first sight! I shall never forget the first time I saw you, when I came to this country a lonely little foreigner—and you a great beautiful lady, for such you seemed to me, though you have told me since you were only a great gawky girl—I know that could never have been—you ran to meet me, and took me in your arms and kissed me. I was as if I had crossed the sea of death and found paradise in your bosom! I am not likely to forget you for Mr. Wingfold, good and kind and strong as he is! Even *she* could not make me forget you, Helen. But neither you nor I can do without Mr. Wingfold any more, I fancy. I wish you liked him better!—but you will in time. You see, he’s not one to pay young ladies compliments, as I have heard some parsons do; and he may be a little—no, not unpolished, not that—that’s not what I mean—but unornamental in his manners! Only, you see—”

"Only, you see, Poldie," interrupted Helen, with a smile, a rare thing between them, "you know all about him, though you never saw him before."

"That is true," returned Leopold; "but then he came to me with his door open, and let me walk in. It doesn't take long to know a man then. He hasn't got a secret like us, Helen," he added sadly.

"What did he say to you?"

"Much that he said to you from the pulpit the other day, I should think."

Then she was right! For all his hardness and want of sympathy, the curate had yet had regard to her entreaties, and was not going to put any horrid notions about duty and self-sacrifice into the poor boy's head!

"He is coming again to-morrow," added Leopold almost gleefully, "and then perhaps he will tell me more, and help me on a bit."

"Did he tell you he wants to bring a friend with him?"

"No."

"I can't see the good of taking more people into our confidence."


"Why should he not do what he thinks best, Helen? You don't interfere with the doctor, why should you with him? When a man is going to the bottom as fast as he can and another comes diving after him, it isn't for me to say how he is to take hold of me. No, Helen; when I trust, I trust out and out."

Helen sighed, thinking how ill that had worked with Emmeline.

Ever since George Bascombe had talked about the Polwarths that day they met them in the park, she had felt a kind of physical horror of them, as if they were some kind of unclean creature that ought not to be in existence at all. But when Leopold uttered himself thus, she felt that the current of events had seized her, and that she could only submit to be carried along.

CHAPTER LX.

DIVINE SERVICE.

HE next day the curate called again on Leopold. But Helen happened to be otherwise engaged for a few minutes, and Mrs. Ramshorn to be in the sick-room when the servant brought his name. With her jealousy of Wingfold's teaching, she would not have admitted him, but Lingard made such loud protest when he heard her say "Not at home," insisting on seeing him, that she had to give way and tell the maid to show him up. She *had no notion*, however, of leaving him alone in the room with the invalid: who could tell what absurd and extravagant ideas he might not put into the boy's head! He might make him turn monk, or Socinian, or Latter-day-Saint, for what she knew! So she sat, blocking up the sole small window in the youth's dark dwelling that looked eastward, and damming back the tide of the dawn from his diseased and tormented soul. Little conversation was therefore possible. Still the face of his new friend was a comfort to Leopold, and ere he left him they had managed to fix an

hour for next day, when they would not be thus foiled of their talk.

That same afternoon Wingfold took the draper to see Polwarth.

Rachel was lying on a sofa in the parlor—a poor little heap, looking more like a grave disturbed by efforts at a resurrection than a form informed with humanity. But she was cheerful and cordial, receiving Mr. Drew and accepting his sympathy most kindly.

“We’ll see what God will do for me,” she said in answer to a word from the curate. Her whole bearing, now as always, was that of one who perfectly trusted a supreme spirit under whose influences lay even the rugged material of her deformed dwelling.

Polwarth allowed Wingfold to help him in getting tea, and the conversation, as will be the case where all are in earnest, quickly found the right channel.

It is not often in real life that such conversations occur. Generally, in any talk worth calling conversation, every man has some point to maintain, and his object is to justify his own thesis and disprove his neighbor’s. I will allow that he may primarily have adopted his thesis because of some sign of truth in it, but his mode of supporting it is generally such as to block up every cranny in his soul at which more truth might enter. In the present case, unusual as it is for so many as three truth-loving men to come thus together on the face of this planet, here were three simply set on uttering truth they had seen, and gaining sight of truth as yet veiled from them.

I shall attempt only a general impression of the result of their evening's intercourse, partly recording the utterances of Polwarth.

"I have been trying hard to follow you, Mr. Polwarth," said the draper, after his host had for a while had the talk to himself, "but I can not get hold of your remarks. One moment I think I have got the end of the clue, and the next find myself abroad again. Would you tell me what you mean by divine service? for I think you must use the phrase in some different sense from what I have been accustomed to."

"Ah! I ought to remember," said Polwarth, "that what has grown familiar to my mind from much solitary thinking, may not at once show itself to another when presented in the forms of a foreign individuality. I ought to have premised that, when I use the phrase *divine service*, I mean nothing whatever belonging to the church or its observances. I mean by it what it ought to mean—the serving of God; the doing of something for God. Shall I make of the church, in my foolish imaginations, a temple of idolatrous worship by supposing that it is for the sake of supplying some need that God has, or of gratifying some taste in him, that I there listen to his word, say prayers to him, and sing his praises? Shall I be such a dull mule in the presence of the living Truth? Or, to use a homely simile, shall I be as the good boy of the nursery-rhyme, who, seated in his corner of selfish complacency, regards the eating of his pie as a virtuous action, enjoys the contemplation of it, and thinks what a pleasing object he thus makes of himself

to his parents? Shall I, to take a step farther, degrade the sanctity of the closet, hallowed in the words of Jesus, by shutting its door in the vain fancy of there doing something that God requires of me as a sacred *observance*? Shall I foolishly imagine that to put in exercise the highest and loveliest, the most entrancing privilege of existence, that of pouring forth my whole heart into the heart of him who is *accountable for* me, who hath glorified me with his own image—in my soul, gentlemen, sadly disfigured as it is in my body!—shall I say that *that* is to do any thing for God? Was I serving my father when I ate the dinner he provided for me? Am I serving my God when I eat his bread and drink his wine?"

"But," said Drew, "is not God pleased that a man should pour out his soul to him?"

"Yes, doubtless; but what would you think of a child who said, 'I am very useful to my father, for when I ask him for any thing, or tell him I love him, it gives him, oh! such pleasure'?"

"I should say he was an unendurable prig. Better he had to be whipped for stealing!" said the curate.

"There would be more hope of his future," returned Polwarth. "Is the child," he continued, "who sits by his father's knee and looks up into his father's face, *servicing* that father because the heart of the father delights to look down upon his child? And shall the moment of my deepest repose and bliss, the moment when I serve myself with the very life of the universe, be called a serving of my God? It is communion with God; he

holds it with me, else never could I hold it with him. I am as the foam-froth upon his infinite ocean, but of the water of the ocean is the bubble on its waves."

Not the eyes only, but the whole face of the man, which had grown of a pure, semi-transparent whiteness, appeared to Wingfold to emit light.

"When my child would serve me," he went on, "he spies out some need I have, springs from his seat at my knee, finds that which will meet my necessity, and is my eager, happy servant, of consequence in his own eyes inasmuch as he has done something for his father. His seat by my knee is love, delight, well-being, peace—not service, however pleasing in my eyes. 'Why do you seat yourself at my knee, my son?' 'To please you, father.' 'Nay, then, my son! go from me, and come again when it shall be to please thyself.'—'Why do you cling to my chair, my daughter?' 'Because I want to be near you, father. It makes me so happy!' 'Come nearer still—come to my bosom, my child, and be yet happier.'—Talk not of public worship as divine service: it is a mockery. Search the prophets, and you will find the observances, fasts and sacrifices and solemn feasts, of the temple by them regarded with loathing and scorn just because by the people they were regarded as *divine service*."

"But," said Mr. Drew, while Wingfold turned towards him with some anxiety lest he should break the mood of the little prophet, "I can't help thinking I have you; for how are poor creatures like us—weak, blundering creatures, sometimes most awkward when best-inten-

tioned—how are we to minister to a perfect God—perfect in wisdom, strength, and every thing—of whom Paul says that he is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing? I can not help thinking that you are fighting merely with a word. Certainly, if the phrase ever was used in that sense, there is no meaning of the kind attached to it now: it stands merely for the forms of public worship."

"Were there no such thing as Divine Service in the true sense of the word, then indeed it would scarcely be worth while to quarrel with its misapplication. But I assert that true and genuine service may be rendered to the living God; and for the development of the divine nature in man, it is necessary that he should do something for God. Nor is it hard to discover how; for God is in every creature that he has made, and in their needs he is needy, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. Therefore Jesus says that whatever is done to one of his little ones is done to him. And if the soul of a man be the temple of the Spirit, then is the place of that man's labor—his shop, his counting-house, his laboratory—the temple of Jesus Christ, where the spirit of the man is incarnate in work. Mr. Drew!"—here the gate-keeper stood up and held out both his hands, palms upward, towards the draper on the other side of the table—"Mr. Drew! your shop is the temple of your service where the Lord Christ, the only image of the Father, is, or ought to be, throned; your counter is, or ought to be, his altar; and every thing thereon laid, with intent of doing as well as you can for your neighbor, in the name of *the* man

Christ Jesus, is a true sacrifice offered to him, a service done to the eternal creating Love of the universe."

The little prophet's head as he stood did not reach the level of the draper's as he sat, but at this Drew dropped his head on his hands upon the table as if bowed down by a weight of thought and feeling and worship.

"I say not," Polwarth went on, "that so doing you will grow a rich man, but I say that by so doing you will be saved from growing too rich, and that you will be a fellow-worker with God for the salvation of his world."

"I must live; I can not give my goods away!" murmured Mr. Drew thinkingly, as one that sought enlightenment.

"That would be to go direct against the order of his world," said Polwarth. "No; a harder task is yours, Mr. Drew—to make your business a gain to you, and at the same time to be not only what is commonly counted just, but interested in, and careful of, and caring for your neighbor, as a servant of the God of bounty who giveth to all men liberally. Your calling is to do the best for your neighbor that you reasonably can."

"But who is to fix what is reasonable?" asked Drew.

"The man himself, thinking in the presence of Jesus Christ. There is a holy moderation which is of God."

"There won't be many fortunes—great fortunes—made after that rule, Mr. Polwarth."

"Very few."

“Then do you say that no great fortunes have been righteously made?”

“If *righteously* means *after the fashion of Jesus Christ*—But I will not judge: that is for the God-enlightened conscience of the man himself to do, not for his neighbor's. Why should I be judged by another's man's conscience? But you see, Mr. Drew—and this is what I was driving at—you have it in your power to *serve* God through the needs of his children all the working day, from morning to night, so long as there is a customer in your shop.”

“I do think you are right, sir,” said the linen-draper. “I had a glimpse of the same thing the other night myself. And yet it seems as if you spoke of a purely ideal state—one that could not be realized in this world.”

“Purely ideal or not, one thing is certain: it will never be reached by one who is so indifferent to it as to believe it impossible. Whether it may be reached in this world or not, that is a question of *no* consequence; whether a man has begun to *reach after* it is of the utmost awfulness of import. And should it be ideal, which I doubt, what else than the ideal have the followers of the ideal man to do with?”

“Can a man reach any thing ideal before he has God dwelling in him, filling every cranny of his soul?” asked the curate, with shining eyes.

“Nothing, I do most solemnly believe,” answered Polwarth. “It weighs on me heavily sometimes,” he resumed, after a pause, “to think how far all but a few are from being able even to entertain the idea of the indwell-

ing in them of the original power of their life. True, God is in every man, else how could he live the life he does live? But that life God keeps alive for the hour when he shall inform the will, the aspiration, the imagination of the man. When the man throws wide his door to the Father of his spirit, when his individual being is thus supplemented—to use a poor, miserable word—with the individuality that originated it, then is the man a whole, healthy, complete existence. Then indeed, and then only, will he do no wrong, think no wrong, love perfectly, and be right merry. Then will he scarce think of praying, because God is in every thought and enters anew with every sensation. Then he will forgive and endure, and pour out his soul for the beloved who yet grope their way in doubt and passion. Then every man will be dear and precious to him, even the worst; for in him also lies an unknown yearning after the same peace wherein he rests and loves.”

He sat down suddenly and a deep silence filled the room.

CHAPTER LXI.

A SHOP IN HEAVEN.

UNCLE," said Rachel, "may I read your vision of the shops in heaven?"

"Oh! no, Rachel. You are not able to read to-night," said her uncle deprecatingly.

"I think I am, uncle. I should like to try. It will let the gentlemen see what you *would* think an ideal state of things.—It is something, Mr. Wingfold, my uncle once dictated to me, and I wrote down just as he said it. He can always do better dictating than writing, but this time he was so ill with asthma that he could not talk much faster than I could write; and yet to be so ill I never saw him show so little suffering; his thinking seemed to make him forget it.—Mayn't I read it, uncle? I know the gentlemen would like to hear it."

"That we should," said both the men at once.

"I will fetch it to you, then," said Polwarth, "if you will tell me where to find it."

Rachel gave him the needful directions, and presently he brought a few sheets of paper and handed them to her.

“This is no dream, Mr. Wingfold,” he said. “It is something I had thought fairly out before I began to dictate it. But the only fit form I could find for it was that of a vision—like the Vision of Mirza, you know.—Now read, Rachel, and I will hold my tongue.”

After a little arranging of the sheets, Rachel began. She read not without difficulty, but her pleasure in what she read helped her through.

““And now,” said my guide to me, “I will bring thee to a city of the righteous, and show thee how they buy and sell in this the kingdom of heaven.” So we journeyed a day and another day and half a day, and I was weary ere we arrived thither. But when I saw the loveliness of the place and drew in the healing air thereof, my weariness vanished as a dream of the night, and I said, *It is well*, I may not now speak of the houses and the dress and the customs of the dwellers therein, save what may belong to the buying and selling of which I have spoken. Gladly would I tell of the streams that went, some noiselessly gliding, others gurgling, some sweeping, some rushing and roaring, through every street, all issuing from one right plenteous fountain in the middle of the city, so that the ear was forever filled with the sound of many waters all the day, ceasing when the night came that silence might have its perfect work upon the soul. Gladly, too, would I tell of the trees and flowers and grass that grew in every street along the banks of the rivers. But I must withhold.

““After I had, I know not for how long, refreshed my soul with what it was thus given me to enjoy—for

in all that country there is no such thing as haste, no darting from one thing to another, but a calm, eternal progress in which unto the day the good thereof is sufficient—one great noon-day my conductor led me into a large place such as we would call a shop here, although the arrangements were different, and an air of stateliness dwelt in and around the house. It was filled with the loveliest silken and woollen stuffs, of all kinds and colors, a thousand delights to the eye—and to the thought also, for here was endless harmony and no discord.

“ I stood in the midst, and my guide stood by me in silence ; for all the time I was in the country he seldom spoke to me save when first I asked of him, and yet he never showed any weariness, and often a half-smile would dwell for a moment upon his countenance.

“ And first I watched the faces of them that sold ; and I could read therein—for be it understood that, according to the degree of his own capacity, a man there could perfectly read the countenance of every neighbor ; that is, except it expressed something that was not in himself—I could read in them nothing of eagerness, but only the calm of a concentrated ministration. There was no seeking there, but a strength of giving, a business-like earnestness to supply lack, enlivened by no haste and dulled by no weariness, brightened ever by the reflected content of those who found their wants supplied. As soon as one buyer was contented they turned graciously to another, and gave ear until they perfectly understood with what object he had come to seek their aid. Nor

did their countenances change utterly as they turned away, for upon them lingered the satisfaction as of one who hath had a success, and by degrees melted into the supervening content.

“ ‘Then I turned to watch the countenances of them that bought. And there in like manner I saw no cupidity and no meanness. They spake humbly, yet not because they sought a favor, but because they were humble; for with their humility was mingled the confidence of receiving that they sought. And truly it was a pleasure to see how every one knew what his desire was, making his choice readily and with decision. I perceived also that every one spoke not merely respectfully, but gratefully, to him who served him. And at meeting and parting, such kindly though brief greetings passed as made me wonder whether every inhabitant of such a mighty city could know every other that dwelt therein. But I soon saw that it came not of individual knowledge, but of universal faith and all-embracing love.

“ ‘And as I stood and watched, suddenly it came into my mind that I had never yet seen the coin of the country, and thereupon I kept my eyes upon a certain woman who bought silk, that when she paid for the same I might see the money. But that which she had largely bought, she took in her arms and carried away, and paid not. Therefore I turned to watch another, who bought for a long journey, but when he carried away what he bought neither did he pay any money. And I said to myself “These are well-known persons, to whom it is more convenient to pay at a certain season;” and I turned to a

third, who bought much fine linen. But behold ! he paid not ! Then I began to observe again those that sold ; whereupon I thought with myself, " How good must be the air of this land for the remembrance of things ! for these men write down nothing to keep on record the moneys men owe them on all sides." And I looked and looked again and yet again, and stood long watching ; but so it was throughout the whole place, which thronged and buzzed and swarmed like the busiest of beehives—no man paid, and no man had a book wherein to write that which the other owed !

" Then I turned to my guide and said, " How lovely is honesty ! and truly from what a labor it absolveth men ! for here I see every man keepeth in his mind his own debts and not the debts of others, so that time is not spent in the paying of small sums, neither in the keeping of account of such ; but he that buyeth counteth up, and doubtless, when the day of reckoning arrives, each cometh and casteth the money he oweth into the merchant's coffer, and both are satisfied."

" Then my conductor smiled, and said, " Watch yet awhile."

" And I did as he said unto me, and stood and watched. But the same thing went on everywhere ; and I said to myself, " Lo ! I see nothing new !" Suddenly, at my side, a man dropped upon his knees and bowed his head to the ground. And those that stood nigh him dropped also upon their knees, and there arose a sound as of soft thunder ; and lo ! every one in the place had dropped upon his knees and spread his hands out before him.

Every voice and every noise was hushed, every movement had ceased, and I and my guide alone were left standing.

“Then I whispered in his ear, “It is the hour of prayer: shall we not kneel also?” And my guide answered, “No man in this city kneeleth because others do, and no man is judged if he kneeleth not. If thou hast any grief or pain upon thee, then kneel; if not then love God in thy heart and be thankful, and kneel when thou goest into thy chamber.” Then said I, “I will not kneel, but will watch and see.” “It is well,” said my guide; and I stood.

“For certain moments all was utter stillness—every man and woman kneeling, with hands outstretched, save him who had first kneeled, and his hands hung by his sides and his head was still bowed to the earth. At length he rose up, and lo! his face was wet with tears; and all the people rose also, with a noise throughout the place; and the man made a low obeisance to them that were nigh him, the which they returned with equal reverence, and then, with downcast eyes, he walked slowly from the shop. The moment he was gone, the business of the place, without a word of remark on any side concerning what had passed, began again as before. People came and went, some more eager and outward, some more staid and inward, but all contented and cheerful. At length a bell somewhere rang sweet and shrill, and after that no one entered the place, and what was in progress began to be led to a decorous conclusion. In three or four minutes the floor was empty, and the people also of

the shop had gone, each about his own affairs, without shutting door or window.

“I went out last with my guide, and we seated ourselves under a tree of the willow kind on the bank of one of the quieter streams, and straightway I began to question him. “Tell me, sir,” I said, “the purport of what I have seen; for not yet have I understood how these happy people do their business and pass from hand to hand not a single coin.” And he answered, “Where greed and ambition and self-love rule, money must be; where there is neither greed nor ambition nor self-rule, money is needless.” And I asked, “Is it then by the same ancient mode of barter that they go about their affairs? truly I saw no exchange of any sort.” “Bethink thee,” said my guide, “if thou hadst gone into any other shop throughout the whole city, thou wouldst have seen the same thing.” “I see not how that should make the matter plainer to me,” I answered. “Where neither greed nor ambition nor selfishness reigneth,” said my guide, “there need and desire have free scope, for they work no evil.” “But even now I understand you not, sir,” I said. “Hear me, then,” answered my guide, “for I will speak to thee more plainly. Wherefore do men take money in their hands when they go where things are?” “Because they may not have the things without giving the money.” “And where they may have things without giving money, there they take no money in their hands?” “Truly no, sir, if there be such a place.” “Then such a place is this, and so is

it here." "But how can men give of their goods and receive naught in return?" "By receiving everything in return. Tell me," said my guide, "why do men take money for their goods?" "That they may have wherewithal to go and buy other things which they need for themselves." "But if they also may go to this place or that place where the things are the which they need, and receive of those things without money and without price, is there then good cause why they should take money in their hands?" "Truly no," I answered; "and I begin, methinks, to see how the affair goeth. Yet are there some things still whereupon I would gladly be resolved. And first of all, how cometh it that men are moved to provide these and those goods for the supply of the wants of their neighbors when they are drawn thereto by no want in themselves and no advantage to themselves?" "Thou reasonest," said my guide, "as one of thine own degree, who to the eyes of the full-born ever look like chrysalids, closed round in a web of their own weaving; and who shall blame thee until thou thyself shinest within thyself? Understand that it is never advantage to himself that moveth a man in this kingdom to undertake this or that. The thing that alone advantageth a man here is the thing which doth without thought unto that advantage. To your world, this world goeth by contraries. The man here that doeth most service, that aideth others the most to the obtaining of their honest desires, is the man who standeth highest with the Lord of the place, and his reward and honor is to be enabled to the spending of himself yet

more for the good of his fellows. There goeth a rumor amongst us even now that one shall ere long be ripe for the carrying of a message from the King to the spirits that are in prison. Thinkest thou it is a less potent stirring up of thought and energy to desire and seek and find the things that will please the eye and cheer the brain and gladden the heart of the people of this great city, so as when one prayeth, *Give me, friend, of thy loaves*, a man may answer, *Take of them, friend, as many as thou needest*—is that, I say, an incentive to diligence less potent than the desire to hoard or to excel? Is it not to share the bliss of God who hoardeth nothing, but ever giveth liberally? The joy of a man here is to enable another to lay hold upon that which is of his own kind and be glad and grow thereby—doctrine strange and unbelievable to the man in whom the well of life is yet sealed. Never have they been many at a time in the old world who could thus enter into the joy of their Lord. And yet, if thou bethink thee, thou wilt perceive that such bliss is not unknown amongst thy fellows. Knowest thou no musician who would find it joy enough for a night to scale the tower of a hundred bells, and send the great meteors of music-light flying over the care-tortured city? Would every one even of thy half-created race reason with himself and say, ‘Truly it is in the night, and no one can see who it is that ministereth; the sounds alone will go forth nor bear my image; I shall reap no honor; I will not rise and go’? Thou knowest, I say, some in thy world who would not speak thus in their hearts, but would willingly consent to be as nothing, so to give life

to their fellows. In this city so is it with all—in shop or workshop, in study or theatre, all seek to spend and be spent for the lovely all." And I said, "One thing tell me, sir: how much a man may have for the asking." "What he will—that is, what he can well use." "Who then shall be the judge thereof?" "Who but the man himself?" "What if he should turn to greed, and begin to hoard and spare?" "Sawest thou not the man this day because of whom all business ceased for a time? To that man had come a thought of accumulation instead of growth, and he dropped upon his knees in shame and terror. And thou sawest how all business ceased, and straightway that of the shop was made what below they call a church; for every one hastened to the poor man's help, the air was filled with praying breath, and the atmosphere of God-loving souls was around him; the foul thought fled, and the man went forth glad and humble, and to-morrow he will return for that which he needeth. If thou shouldst be present then, thou wilt see him more tenderly ministered unto than all the rest." "And if such a man prayed not?" "If such a man slept ere he repented, he would wake with hatred in his heart toward the city and every one therein, and would straightway flee into the wilderness. And the angel of the Lord would go out after him and smite him with a word, and he would vanish from amongst us, and his life would be the life of one of those least of living things that are in your world born of the water; and there must he grow up again, crawling through the channels of thousand-folded difference, from animal to ani-

mal, until at length a human brain be given him, and after generations he become once again capable of being born of the spirit into the kingdom of liberty. Then shall all his past life open upon him, and in shame and dismay will he repent a thousand-fold, and will sin no more. Such, at least, are the thoughts of our wise men upon the matter; but truly we know not." "It is good," I said. "But how are men guided as to what lies to them to provide for the general good?" "Every man doeth what thing he can, and the more his labor is desired the more he rejoices." "If a man should desire that he could nowhere find in the city?" "Then he would straightway do his endeavor to provide that thing for all in the city who might after him desire the same." "Now, sir, methinks I know and understand," I answered. And we rose and went further."


"I think that *could* be!" said the curate, breaking the silence that followed when Rachel ceased.

"Not in this world," said the draper.

"To doubt that it *could* be," said the gate-keeper, "would be to doubt whether the kingdom of heaven is a chimera or a divine idea."

CHAPTER LXII.

POLWARTH AND LINGARD.

HE morning after Wingfold's second visit Lingard—much to his sister's surprise, partly to her pleasure, and somewhat to her consternation—asked for his clothes: he wanted to get up. So little energy had he hitherto shown, so weak was he, and so frequent had been the symptoms of returning fever, that the doctor had not yet thought of advising more than an hour's sitting while his bed was made comfortable. And Helen had felt that she had him, if not safe, yet safer in bed than he could be elsewhere.

His wish to rise was a sign that he was getting better. But could she wish him to get better, seeing every hour threatened to be an hour of torture? On the other hand, she could not but hope that, for the last day or so, his mind had been a little more at ease. Assuredly the light in his eye was less troubled: perhaps he saw prospect of such mental quiet as might render life endurable.

He declined assistance, and Helen, having got him every thing he required, left the room to wait within hearing. It took him a long time to dress, but he had resolved to do it himself, and at length called Helen.

She found he looked worse in his clothes—fearfully worn and white. Ah! what a sad ghost he was of his former sunny self! Helen turned her eyes from him that he might not see how changed she thought him, and there were the trees in the garden, and the meadows and the park beyond, bathing in the strength of the sun betwixt the blue sky and the green earth! “What a hideous world it is!” she said to herself. She was not yet persuaded, like her cousin, that it was the best possible world—only that, unfortunately, not much was possible in worlds.

“Will you get me something, Helen?” he said. “Mr. Wingfold will be here, and I want to be able to talk to him.”

It was the first time he had asked for food, though he had seldom refused to take what she brought him. She made him lie on the couch, and gave orders that if Mr. Wingfold called, he should be shown up at once. Leopold’s face brightened; he actually looked pleased when his soup came. When Wingfold was announced, he grew for a moment radiant.

Helen received the curate respectfully, but not very cordially: *she* could not make Leopold’s face shine!

“Would your brother like to see Mr. Polwarth?” asked the curate rather abruptly.

“I will see any one you would like me to see, Mr.

Wingfold," answered Lingard for himself, with a decision that strongly indicated returning strength.

"But, Leopold, you know that it is hardly to be desired," suggested Helen, "that more persons—"

"I don't know that," interrupted Leopold, with strange expression.

"Perhaps I had better tell you, Miss Lingard," said the curate, "that it was Mr. Polwarth who found the thing I gave you. After your visit, he could not fail to put things together; and had he been a common man, I should have judged it prudent to tell him for the sake of secrecy what I have told him for the sake of counsel. I repeat in your brother's hearing what I said to you, that he is the wisest and best man I have ever known. I left him in the meadow at the foot of the garden. He is suffering to-day, and I wanted to save him the longer walk. If you will allow me, I will go and bring him in."

"Do," said Leopold. "Think, Helen! If he is the wisest and best man Mr. Wingfold ever knew! Tell him where to find the key."

"I will go myself," she said, with a yielding to the inevitable.

When she opened the door, there was the little man seated, a few yards off, on the grass. He had plucked a cowslip, and was looking into it so intently that he neither heard nor saw her.

"Mr. Polwarth!" said Helen.

He lifted his eyes, rose, and, taking off his hat, said, with a smile,

"I was looking into the cowslip for the spots which

the fairy in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* calls *rubies*. How is your brother, Miss Lingard?"

Helen answered with cold politeness, and led the way up the garden with considerably more stateliness of demeanor than was necessary.

When he followed her into the room,

"This is Mr. Polwarth, Leopold," said the curate, rising respectfully. "You may speak to him as freely as to me, and he is far more able to give you counsel than I am."

"Would you mind shaking hands with me, Mr. Polwarth?" said Leopold, holding out his shadowy hand.

Polwarth took it, with the kindest of smiles, and held it a moment in his.

"You think me an odd-looking creature, don't you?" he said; "but just because God made me so I have been compelled to think about things I might have otherwise have forgotten, and that is why Mr. Wingfold would have me come to see you."

The curate placed a chair for him, and the gate-keeper sat down. Helen seated herself a little way off in the window, pretending—hardly more—to hem a handkerchief. Leopold's big eyes went wandering from one to the other of the two men.

"What a horrible world it is!" was the thought that kept humming on like an evil insect in Helen's heart.

"I am sorry to see you suffer so much," said Leopold kindly, for he heard the labored breath of the little man, and saw the heaving of his chest.

"It does not greatly trouble me," returned Polwarth.

"It is not my fault, you see," he added, with a smile; "at least I don't think it is."

"You are happy to suffer without fault," said Leopold. "It is because it is just that my punishment seems greater than I can bear."

"You need God's forgiveness in your soul."

"I don't see how that should do any thing for me."

"I do not mean it would take away your suffering; but it would make you able to bear it. It would be fresh life in you."

"I can't see why it should. I can't feel that I have wronged God. I have been trying to feel it, Mr. Wingfold, ever since you talked to me. But I don't know God, and I only feel what I have done to Emmeline. If I said to God, *Pardon me*, and he said to me, *I do pardon you*, I should feel just the same. What could that do to set any thing right that I have set wrong? I am what I am and what I ever shall be, and the injury which came from me cleaves fast to her, and is my wrong wherever she is."

He hid his face in his hands.

"What use *can* it be to torture the poor boy so?" said Helen to herself.

The two men sat silent. Then Polwarth said,

"I doubt if there is any use in trying to feel. And no amount of trying could enable you to imagine what God's forgiveness is like to those that have it in them. Tell me something more you do feel, Mr. Lingard."

"I feel that I could kill myself to bring her back to life."

"That is, you would kindly make amends for the wrong you have done her."

"I would give my life, my soul, to do it."

"And there is nothing you can do for it?"

Helen began to tremble.

"What is there that can be done?" answered Leopold. "It does seem hard that a man should be made capable of doing things that he is not made capable of undoing again."

"It is indeed a terrible thought! And even the smallest wrong is, perhaps, too awful a thing for created being ever to set right again."

"You mean it takes God to do that?"

"I do."

"I don't see how he could ever set some things right."

"He would not be God if he could not or would not do for his creature what that creature can not do for himself, and must have done for him or lose his life."

"Then he isn't God, for he can't help me."

"Because you don't see what can be done you say God can do nothing—which is as much as to say there can not be more within his scope than there is within yours! One thing is clear: that if he saw no more than lies within your ken, he could not be God. The very impossibility you see in the thing points to the region wherein God works."

"I don't quite understand you. But it don't matter. It's all a horrible mess. I wish I were dead."

"My dear sir, is it reasonable that because a being so capable of going wrong finds himself incapable of set-

ting right, he should judge it useless to cry to that Being who called him into being to come to his aid, and that in the face of the story—if it be but an old legend, worn and disfigured—that he took upon himself our sins?"

Leopold hung his head.

"God needs no making up to him," the gate-keeper went on; "so far from it that he takes our sins on himself that he may clear them out of the universe. How could he say that he took our sins upon him if he could not make amends for them to those they had hurt?"

"Ah!" cried Leopold, with a profound sigh, "if that could be! if he could really do that!"

"Why, of course he can do that!" said Polwarth. "What sort of watch-maker were he who could not set right the watches and clocks himself made?"

"But the hearts of men and women!—"

"Which God does far more than make!" interposed Polwarth. "That a being able to make another self-conscious being distinct from himself, should be able also to set right whatever that being could set wrong seems to me to follow of simple necessity. He might even, should that be fit, put the man himself in the way of making up for what he had done, or at least put it in his power to ask and receive a forgiveness that would set all right between him and the person wronged. One of the painful things in the dogma of the endless loss of the wicked is that it leaves no room for the righteous to make up to them for the wrongs they did them in this life. For the righteous do the wicked far more wrong than they think—the righteous being all the

time, in reality, the wealthy, and the wicked the poor. But it is a blessed word that there are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first."

Helen stared. This last sounded to her mere raving madness, and she thought how wrong she had been to allow such fanatics to gain power over her poor Leopold—who sat before them whiter than ever, and with what she took for a wilder gleam in his eye.

"Is there not the might of love, and all eternity for it to work in, to set things right?" ended Polwarth.

"O God!" cried Leopold, "if that might be true! That would be a gift indeed—the power to make up for the wrong I have done!"

He rose from the couch—slowly, sedately, I had almost said formally, like one with a settled object—and stood erect, swaying a little from weakness.

"Mr. Wingfold," he said, "I want of you one more favor: will you take me to the nearest magistrate? I wish to give myself up."

Helen started up and came forward, paler than the sick man.

"Mr. Wingfold! Mr. Polwarth!" she said, and turned from the one to the other, "the boy is not himself. You will never allow him to do such a mad thing!"

"It may be the right thing," said the curate to Leopold, "but we must not act without consideration."

"I have considered and considered it for days—for weeks," returned Leopold; "but until this moment I never had the courage to resolve on the plainest of duties. Helen, if I were to go up to the

throne of God with the psalm in my mouth, and say to him, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,' it would be false; for I have sinned against every man, woman, and child in England at least, and I will repudiate myself. To the throne of God I want to go, and there is no way thither for me but through the gate of the law."

"Leopold!" pleaded Helen as if for her own life with some hard judge, "what good can it do to send another life after the one that is gone? It can not bring it back or heal a single sorrow for its loss."

"Except, perhaps, my own," said Leopold in a feeble voice, but not the less in a determined tone.

"Live till God sends for you," persisted Helen, heedless of his words. "You can give your life to make up for the wrong you have done in a thousand better ways: that would be but to throw it in the dirt! There is so much good waiting to be done!"

Leopold sank on the couch.

"I am sitting down again, Helen, only because I am not able to stand," he said. "I *will* go. Don't talk to me about doing good! Whatever I touched I should but smear with blood. I want the responsibility of my own life taken off me. I am like the horrible creature Frankenstein made—one that has no right to existence—and at the same time like the maker of it, who is accountable for that existence. I am a blot on God's creation that must be wiped off. For this my strength is given back to me, and I am once more able to will and resolve. You will find I can act too. Helen, if you will indeed be my sister, you must *not* prevent me now. I

know it is hard upon you, awfully hard. I know I am dragging your life down with mine, but I can not help it. If I don't do it, I shall but go out of one madness into another, ever a deeper, until the devils can't hold me. Mr. Polwarth, is it not my duty to give myself up? Ought not the evil thing to be made manifest and swept out of the earth? Most people grant it a man's first duty to take care of his life: that is the only thing I can do for mine. It is now a filthy pool with a corpse in it: I would clean it out; have the thing buried at least, though never forgotten—never, never forgotten. Then I shall die and go to God and see what he can do for me."

"Why should you put it off till then?" said Polwarth. "Why not go to him at once and tell him all?"

As if it had been Samuel at the command of Eli, Leopold rose and crept feebly across the floor to the dressing-room, entered it and closed the door.

Then Helen turned upon Wingfold with a face white as linen and eyes flashing with troubled wrath. The tigress-mother swelled in her heart, and she looked like a Mænad indeed.

"Is this then your religion?" she cried, with quivering nostril. "Would he you dare to call your master have stolen into the house of a neighbor to play upon the weakness of a poor lad suffering from brain-fever? A fine trophy of your persuasive power and priestly craft you would make of him! What is it to you whether he confesses his sins or not? If he confesses them to

him you say is your God, is not that enough? For shame, gentlemen!"

She ceased, and stood trembling and flashing—a human thunder-cloud. Neither of the men cared to assert innocence, because, although they had not advised the step, they entirely approved of it.

A moment more, and her anger suddenly went out. She burst into tears, and falling on her knees before the curate, begged and prayed like a child condemned to some frightful punishment. It was terrible to Wingfold to see a woman in such an agony of prayer to one who would not grant it—and that one himself. In vain he sought to raise her.

"If you do not save Leopold, I will kill myself," she cried, "and my blood will be on your head."

"The only way to save your brother is to strengthen him to do his duty, whatever that may be."

The hot-fit of her mental labor returned. She sprang to her feet, and her face turned again, almost like that of a corpse, with pale wrath.

"Leave the house!" she said, turning sharply upon Polwarth, who stood solemn and calm at Wingfold's side, a step behind. It was wonderful what an unconscious dignity radiated from him.

"If my friend goes, I go too," said Wingfold. "But I must first tell your brother why."

He made a step towards the dressing-room.

But now came a fresh change of mood upon Helen. She darted between him and the door, and stood there with such a look of humble entreaty as went to his very

heart and all but unmanned him. Ah! how lovely she looked in the silent prayer of tears! But not even her tears could turn Wingfold from what seemed his duty. They could only bring answering tears from the depth of a tender heart. She saw he would not flinch.

"Then may God do to you as you have done to me and mine!" she said.

"Amen!" returned Wingfold and Polwarth together.

The door of the dressing-room opened, and out came Leopold, his white face shining.

"God has heard me!" he cried.

"How do you know that?" said his sister, in the hoarse accents of unbelieving despair.

"Because he has made me strong to do my duty. He has reminded me that another man may be accused of my crime, and now to conceal myself were to double my baseness."

"It will be time enough to think of that when there is a necessity for it. The thing you imagine may never happen," said Helen, in the same unnatural voice.

"Leave it," cried Leopold, "until an innocent man shall have suffered the torture and shame of a false accusation, that a guilty man may a little longer act the hypocrite! No, Helen, I have not fallen so low as that yet. Believe me, this is the only living hour I have had since I did the deed!" But as he spoke, the light died out of his face; and ere they could reach him, he had fallen heavily on the floor.

"You have killed him!" cried Helen, in a stifled

shriek ; for all the time she had never forgotten that her aunt might hear.

But the same moment she caught from his condition a lurid hope.

“Go, I beg of you,” she said, “by the window there, before my aunt comes. She must have heard the fall. There is the key of the door below.”

The men obeyed, and left the house in silence.

It was some time before Leopold returned to consciousness. He made no resistance to being again put to bed, where he lay in extreme exhaustion.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE STRONG MAN.

THE next day he was still much too exhausted and weak to talk about any thing. He took what his sister brought him, smiled his thanks, and once put up his hand and stroked her cheek. But her heart was not gladdened by these signs of comparative composure, for what gave him quiet but the same that filled her with unspeakable horror?

The day after that was Saturday, and George Bascombe came as usual. The sound of his step in the hall made her dying hope once more flutter its wings: having lost the poor stay of the parson, from whom she had never expected much, she turned, in her fresh despair, to her cousin, from whom she had never looked for any thing. But what was she to say to him? Nothing yet, she resolved; but she would take him to see Leopold; for was he not sure to hear that the parson had been admitted? She did not feel at all that she was doing right, but she would do it; and if she left them together, possibly

George might drop some good *practical* advice, which, though spoken in ignorance, might yet tell. George was such a healthy nature and such a sound thinker! Was it not as ridiculous as horrible for any man to think that he had a right to throw away his very existence, and bring disgrace upon his family as well, for a mere point of honor—no, not honor, mere fastidiousness?

Leopold was better, and willing enough to see George, saying only,

“I would rather it were Mr. Wingfold. But he can't come to-day, I suppose, to-morrow being Sunday.”

George's entrance brought with it a waft of breezy health and a show of bodily vigor pleasant and refreshing to the heart of the invalid. Kindness shone in his eyes, and his large, handsome hand was out as usual while he was yet yards away. It swallowed up that of poor Leopold, and held it fast.

“Come come, old fellow! what's the meaning of this?” he said right cheerily. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself—lying in bed like this in such weather! Why ain't you riding in the park with Helen instead of moping in this dark room? You'll be as blind as the fish in the cave of Kentucky if you don't get out of this directly! We must see what we can do to get you up!”

He glanced round the room, saw that Helen had left it, and changed his tone to a lower and more serious one:

“I say, my boy, you must have been playing old Harry with your constitution to bring yourself to such a

pass! By Jove! this will never do! You must turn over a new leaf, you know. That sort of thing never pays. The game's not worth the candle. Why, you've been at death's door, and life's not so long that you can afford to play ducks and drakes with it."

Thus he talked, in expostulatory rattle, the very high-priest of social morality, for some time before Leopold could get a word in. But when he did, it turned the current into quite another channel.

An hour passed, and George reappeared in the drawing-room, where Helen was waiting for him. He looked very grave.

"I fear matters are worse with poor Leopold than I had imagined," he said.

Helen gave a sad nod of acquiescence.

"He's quite off his head," continued George,—"telling me such an awful cock-and-bull story with the greatest gravity! He *will* have it that he is a murderer—the murderer of that very girl I was telling you about, you remember—"

"Yes, yes! I know," said Helen, as a faint gleam of reviving hope shot up from below her horizon. George took the whole thing for a sick fancy, and who was likely to know better than he—a lawyer, and skilled in evidence? Not a word would she say to interfere with such an opinion!

"I hope you gave him a good talking to," she said.

"Of course I did," he answered; "but it was of no use. I see exactly how it is. He gave me a full and circumstantial account of the affair, filling up all the gaps,

it is true, but going only just as far as the newspapers supplied the skeleton. How he got away, for instance, he could not tell me. And now nothing will serve him but confess it! He don't care who knows it! He's as mad as a hatter!—I beg your pardon, Helen—on that one point, I mean. The moment I saw him I read madness in his eye. What's to be done now?"

"George, I look to you," said Helen. "Poor aunt is no use. Think what will become of her if the unhappy boy should attempt to give himself up! We should be the talk of the county—of the whole country!"

"Why didn't you tell me of this before, Helen? It must have been coming on for some time."

"George, I didn't know what to do. And I had heard you say such terrible things about the duty of punishing crime."

"Good gracious! Helen, where is your logic? What has crime to do with it? Is downright stark, staring madness a crime? Any one with half an eye can see the boy is mad!"

Helen saw she had made a slip, and held her peace. George went on:

"He ought to be shut up."

"No! no! no!" Helen almost screamed, and covered her face with her hands.

"I've done my best to persuade him. But I will have another try. That a fellow is out of his mind is no reason why he should be unassailable by good logic—that is, if you take him on his own admissions."

“ I fear you will make nothing of him, George. He is set upon it, and I don't know what *is* to be done.”

George got up, went back to Leopold, and plied him with the very best of arguments. But they were of no avail. There was but one door out of hell, and that was the door of confession—let what might lie on the other side of it.

“ Who knows,” he said, “ but the law of a *life for a life* may have come of compassion for the murderer ?”

“ Nonsense !” said George. “ It comes of the care of society over its own constituent parts.”

“ Whatever it came from, I know this,” returned Leopold, “ that since I made up my mind to confess, I am a man again.”

George was silent. He found himself in that rare condition for him—perplexity. It would be most awkward if the thing came to be talked of ! Some would even be fools enough to believe the story ! Entire proof of madness would only make such set it down as the consequence—or if pity prevailed, then as the cause—of the deed. They might be compelled to shut him up to avoid no end of the most frightful annoyances. But Helen, he feared, would not consent to that. And then his story was so circumstantial—and therefore so far plausible—that there was no doubt most magistrates would be ready at once to commit him for trial—and then where would there be an end of the most offensive embarrassments ?

Thus George reflected uneasily. But at length an idea struck him.

"Well," he said lightly, "if you will, you will. We must try to make it as easy for you as we can. I will manage it, and go with you. I know all about such things, you know. But it won't do just to-day. If you were to go before a magistrate looking as you do now, he would not listen to a word you uttered. He would only fancy you in a fever, and send you to bed. If you are quiet to-day—let me see: to-morrow is Sunday—and if you are in the same mind on Monday, I will take you to Mr. Hooker—he's one of the county magistrates—and you shall make your statement to him."

"Thank you. I should like Mr. Wingfold to go too."

"So!" said George to himself. "By all means," he answered. "We can take him with us."

He went again to Helen.

"This is a most awkward business," he said. "Poor girl! what you must have gone through with him! I had no idea! But I see my way out of it. Keep your mind easy, Helen. I do see what I can do. Only, what's the meaning of his wanting that fellow Wingfold to go with him? I shouldn't a bit wonder now if it all came of some of his nonsense! At least it may be that ass of a curate that has put confession in his head—to save his soul, of course! How did he come to see him?"

"The poor boy would see him."

"What made him want to see him?"

Helen held her peace. She saw George suspected the truth.

"Well, no matter," said George. "But one never knows what may come of things. We ought always

to look well ahead. You had better go and lie down a while, Helen ; you don't seem quite yourself."

"I am afraid to leave Leopold," she answered. "He will be telling aunt and every body now."

"That I will take care he does not," said George. "You go and lie down a while."

Helen's strength had been sorely tried ; she had borne up bravely to the last ; but now that she could do no more, and her brother had taken himself out of her hands, her strength had begun to give way, and, almost for the first time in her life, in daylight, she longed to go to bed. Let George, or Wingfold, or who would, see to the wilful boy ; she had done what she could.

She gladly yielded to George's suggestion, sought an unoccupied room, bolted the door, and threw herself upon the bed.

CHAPTER LXIV.

GEORGE AND LEOPOLD.



GEORGE went again to Leopold's room, and sat down by him. The youth lay with his eyes half closed, and a smile—a faint, sad one—flickered over his face. He was asleep: from infancy he had slept with his eyes open.

“Emmeline!” he murmured, in the tone of one who entreats forgiveness.

“Strange infatuation!” said George to himself. “Even his dreams are mad. Good God! there can't be any thing in it, can there? I begin to feel as if I were not quite safe myself. Mad-doctors go mad themselves they say. I wonder what sort of floating sporule carries the infection—reaching the brain by the nose, I fancy. Or perhaps there is latent madness in us all, requiring only the presence of another madness to set it free.”

Leopold was awake and looking at him.

“Is it a very bad way of dying?” he asked.

“What is, old boy?”

“Hanging.”

"Yes, very bad—choking, you know," answered George, who wanted to make the worst of it.

"I thought the neck was broken and all was over," returned Leopold, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"Yes, that's how it ought to be ; but it fails so often !"

"At least there's no more hanging in public, and that's a comfort," said Leopold.

"What a queer thing," said George to himself, "that a man should be ready to hang for an idea ! Why should he not do his best to enjoy what is left of the sunlight, seeing, as their own prophets say, the night cometh when no man can work ? A few more whiffs of his cigar before it goes out would hurt no one. It is one thing to hang a murderer, and quite another to hang yourself if you happen to be the man. But he's stark, raving mad, and must be humored. Dance upon nothing for an idea ! Well, it's not without plenty of parallels in history ! I wonder whether his one idea would give way now if it were brought to the actual test of hanging ! It is a pity it couldn't be tried, just for experiment's sake. But a strait-waistcoat would be better."

Leopold's acquaintance with George had been but small, and of his favorite theories he knew nothing. But he had always known that he was not merely his sister's cousin, but the trusted friend both of her and of her aunt ; and since he had come to know of his frequent visits, he had begun to believe him more to Helen than a friend. Hence the moment he had made up his mind to confess, he was ready to trust George entirely ; and

although he was disappointed to find him receive his communication in a spirit so different from that of Wingfold and his friend, he felt no motion of distrust on that account, seeing Helen, who had been to him true as steel, took the same view of his resolution.

“What would you do yourself then, George, if you had committed a crime like mine?” he asked, after lying silent for a while.

None of George’s theories had greatly taxed his imagination. He had not been in any habit of fancying himself in this or that situation—and when he did, it was always in some pleasant one of victory or recognition. Possible conditions of humanity other than pleasant he had been content to regard from the outside and come to logical conclusions concerning, without, as a German would say, thinking himself into them at all; and it would have been to do the very idea of George Bascombe a wrong to imagine him entangled in any such net of glowing wire as a crime against human society! Therefore, although for most questions George had always an answer ready, for this he had none at hand, and required a moment, and but a moment, to think.

“I would say to myself,” he replied, “‘What is done is done, and is beyond my power to alter or help.’ And so I would be a man, and bear it—not a weakling, and let it crush me. No, by Jove! it shouldn’t crush *me!*”

“Ah! but you haven’t tried the weight of it, George!” returned Leopold.

“God forbid!” said George.

“God forbid! indeed,” rejoined Leopold; “but there ’tis done for all his forbidding!”

“What’s done is done, God or devil, and must be borne, I say,” said Bascombe, stretching out his legs. He was aware it sounded heartless, but how could he help it? What else was there to be said?

“But if you can’t bear it? If it is driving you mad—mad—mad! If you must do something or kill yourself?” cried Leopold.

“You haven’t done your best at trying yet,” returned George. “But you are ill, and not very able to try, I dare say, and so we can’t help it. On Monday we shall go to Mr. Hooker, and see what he says to it.”

He rose and went to get a book from the library. On the stair he met the butler: Mr. Wingfold had called to see Mr. Lingard.

“He can’t see him to-day; he is too much exhausted,” said Bascombe; and the curate left the house thoughtful and sorry, feeling as if a vulture had settled by the side of the youth—a good-natured vulture, no doubt, but not the less one bent on picking out the eyes of his mind.

He walked away along the street towards the church with downbent head, seeing no one. He entered the churchyard not looking whither he went: a lovely soul was in pain and peril, and he could not get near to help it. They were giving it choke-damp to breathe, instead of mountain air. They were washing its sores with anodynes instead of laying them open with the knife of honesty, that they might be cleansed and healed. He

found himself stumbling among the level gravestones, and stopped and sat down.

He sat a while, seeming to think of nothing, his eyes resting on a little tuft of moss that shone like green gold in the sunlight on the shoulder of an awkward little cherub's wing. Ere long he found himself thinking how not the soul of Leopold but that of Helen was in chief danger. Poor Leopold had the serpent of his crime to sting him alive, but Helen had the vampire of an imperfect love to fan her asleep with the airs of a false devotion. It was Helen he had to be anxious about more than Leopold.

He rose and walked back to the house.

"Can I see Miss Lingard?" he asked.

It was a maid who opened the door this time. She showed him into the library, and went to inquire.

CHAPTER LXV.

WINGFOLD AND HELEN.



WHEN Helen lay down, she tried to sleep; but she could not even lie still. For all her preference of George and his counsel, and her hope in the view he took of Leopold's case, the mere knowledge that in the next room her cousin sat by her brother made her anxious and restless.

At first it was the bare feeling that they were together—the thing she had for so long taken such pains to prevent. Next came the fear lest Leopold should succeed in persuading George that he was really guilty—in which case what should George, the righteous man, counsel? And, last and chief of all, what hope of peace to Leopold could he in any of his counsel—except, indeed, he led him up to the door of death and urged him into the nothingness behind it? Then what if George should be wrong, and there *was* something behind it? Whatever sort of a something it might be, could the teaching of George be in the smallest measure a preparation for it? Were it not better, so far as the *possibility* which

remained untouched by any of George's arguments was concerned, that Leopold should die believing after Mr. Wingfold's fashion, and not disbelieving after George's? If then there were nothing behind, he would be nothing the worse; if there were, the curate might have in some sort prepared him for it.

And now first she began to feel that she was a little afraid of her cousin—that she had yielded to his influence, or rather allowed him to assume upon the possession of influence, until she was aware of something that somewhere galled. He was a very good fellow, but was he one fit to rule her life? Would her nature consent to look up to his always, if she were to marry him? But the thought only flitted like a cloud across the surface of her mind, for all her care was Leopold, and, alas! with him she was now almost angry, and it grieved her sorely.

All these feelings together had combined to form her mood, when her maid came to the door with the message that Mr. Wingfold was in the library. She resolved at once to see him.

The curate's heart trembled a little as he waited for her. He was not quite sure that it was his business to tell her her duty, yet something seemed to drive him to it: he could not bear the idea of her going on in the path of crookedness. It is no easy matter for one man to tell another his duty in the simplest relations of life; and here was a man, naturally shy and self-distrustful, daring to rebuke and instruct a woman whose presence was

mighty upon him, and whose influence was tenfold heightened by the suffering that softened her beauty !

She entered, troubled, yet stately ; doubtful, yet with a kind of half-trust in her demeanor ; white and blue-eyed, with pained mouth and a droop of weariness and suffering in eyelids and neck—a creature to be worshipped, if only for compassion and dignified distress.

Thomas Wingfold's nature was one more than usually bent towards helpfulness, but his early history, his lack of friends, of confidence, of convictions, of stand or aim in life, had hitherto prevented the outcome of that tendency. But now, like issuing water, which, having found way, gathers force momentarily, the pent-up ministration of his soul was asserting itself. Now that he understood more of the human heart, and recognized in this and that human countenance the bars of a cage through which peeped an imprisoned life, his own heart burned in him with the love of the helpless ; and if there was mingled therein any thing of the ambition of benefaction, any thing of the love of power, any thing of self-recommendation, pride of influence, or desire to be a centre of good, and rule in a small kingdom of the aided and aiding, these marshy growths had the fairest chance of dying an obscure death ; for the one sun potent on the wheat for life and on the tares for death is the face of Christ Jesus, and in that presence Wingfold lived more and more from day to day.

And now came Helen, who, more than any one whose history he had yet learned—more perhaps than even her brother—needed such help as he confidently hoped he

knew now where she might find ! But when he saw her stand before him wounded and tearful and proud, regarding his behavior in respect of her brother as cruel and heartless ; when he felt in his very soul that she was jealous of his influence, that she disliked and even despised him, it was only with a strong effort he avoided assuming a manner correspondent to the idea of himself he saw reflected in her mind, and submitting himself, as it were, to be what she judged him.

When, however, by a pure effort of will, he rose above this weakness and looked her full and clear in the face, a new jealousy of himself arose : she stood there so lovely, so attractive, so tenfold womanly in her misery, that he found he must keep a stern watch upon himself lest interest in her as a woman should trespass on the sphere of simple humanity, wherein with favoring distinction is recognized neither Jew nor Greek, prince nor peasant—not even man or woman ; only the one human heart that can love and suffer. It aided him in this respect, however, that his inherent modesty caused him to look up to Helen as to a suffering goddess, noble, grand, lovely, only ignorant of the one secret of which he, haunting the steps of the Unbound Prometheus, had learned a few syllables, broken yet potent, which he would fain, could he find how, communicate in their potency to her. And besides, to help her now looking upon him from the distant height of conscious superiority, he must persuade her to what she regarded as an unendurable degradation ! The circumstances assuredly protected

him from any danger of offering her such expression of sympathy as might not have been welcome to her.

It is true that the best help a woman can get is from a right man; equally true with its converse; but let the man who ventures take heed. Unless he is able to counsel a woman to the hardest thing that bears the name of duty, let him not dare give advice even to her asking.

Helen, however, had not come to ask advice of Wingfold. She was in no such mood. She was indeed weary of a losing strife, and, only for a glimmer of possible help from her cousin, saw ruin inevitable before her. But this revival of hope in George had roused afresh her indignation at the intrusion of Wingfold with what she chose to lay to his charge as unsought counsel. At the same time, through all the indignation, terror, and dismay, something within her murmured audibly enough that the curate, and not her cousin, was the guide who could lead her brother where grew the herb of what peace might yet be had. It was therefore with a sense of bewilderment, discord, and uncertainty that she now entered the library.

Wingfold rose, made his obeisance, and advanced a step or two. He would not offer a hand that might be unwelcome, and Helen did not offer hers. She bent her neck graciously, and motioned him to be seated.

"I hope Mr. Lingard is not worse," he said.

Helen started. Had any thing happened while she had been away from him?

"No. Why should he be worse?" she answered. "Have they told you any thing?"

"I have heard nothing; only, as I was not allowed to see him—"

"I left him with Mr. Bascombe half an hour ago," she said, willing to escape the imputation of having refused him admittance.

Wingfold gave an involuntary sigh.

"You do not think that gentleman's company desirable for my brother, I presume," she said, with a smile so lustreless that it seemed bitter. "He won't do him any harm—at least I do not think you need fear it."

"Why not? No one in your profession can think his opinions harmless, and certainly he will not suppress them."

"A man with such a weight on his soul as your brother carries will not be ready to fancy it lightened by having lumps of lead thrown upon it. An easy mind may take a shroud on its shoulders for wings, but when trouble comes and it wants to fly, then it knows the difference. Leopold will not be misled by Mr. Bascombe."

Helen grew paler. She would have him misled—so far as not to betray himself.

"I am far more afraid of your influence than of his," added the curate.

"What bad influence do you suppose me likely to exercise?" asked Helen, with a cold smile.

"The bad influence of wishing him to act upon your conscience instead of his own."

“Is my conscience then a worse one than Leopold's?” she asked, but as if she felt no interest in the answer.

“It is not his, and that is enough. His own, and no other, can tell him what to do.”

“Why not leave him to it, then?” she said bitterly.

“That is what I want of you, Miss Lingard. I would have you fear to touch the life of the poor youth.”

“Touch his life! I would give him mine to save it. *You* counsel him to throw it away!”

“Alas! what different meanings we put on the word! You call the few years he may have to live in this world his life; while I—”

“While you count it the millions of which you know nothing—somewhere whence no one has ever returned to bring any news!—a wretched life at best, if it be such as you represent it.”

“Pardon me, that is merely what you suppose I mean by the word. I do not mean that; I mean something altogether different. When I spoke of his life, I thought nothing about here or there, now or then. You will see what I mean if you think how the life came back to his eye and the color to his cheek the moment he had made up his mind to do what had long seemed his duty. When I saw him again, that light was still in his eyes and a feeble hope looked out of every feature. Existence, from a demon-haunted vapor, had begun to change to a morning of spring; life, the life of conscious well-being, of law and order and peace, had begun to dawn in obedience and self-renunciation; his resurrection was at hand. But you then,

and now you and Mr. Bascombe, would stop this resurrection ; you would seat yourselves upon his gravestone to keep him down ! And why ? Lest he, lest you, lest your family should be disgraced by letting him out of his grave to tell the truth."

"Sir !" cried Helen indignantly, drawing herself to her full height and something more.

Wingfold took one step nearer to her. "My calling is to speak the truth," he said ; "and I am bound to warn you that you will never be at peace in your own soul until you love your brother aright."

"Love my brother !" Helen almost screamed. "I would die for him."


"Then at least let your pride die for him," said Wingfold, not without indignation.

Helen left the room, and Wingfold the house.

She had hardly shut the door and fallen again upon the bed, when she began to know in her heart that the curate was right. But the more she knew it, the less would she confess it even to herself : it was unendurable.

CHAPTER LXVI.

A REVIEW.

HE curate walked hurriedly home and seated himself at his table, where yet lay his Greek Testament open at the passage he had been pondering for his sermon. Alas ! all he had then been thinking with such fervor had vanished. He knew his inspiring text, but the rest was gone. Worst of all, feeling was gone with thought, and was, for the time at least, beyond recall. Righteous as his anger was, it had ruffled the mirror of his soul till it could no longer reflect heavenly things. He rose, caught up his New Testament, and went to the churchyard. It was a still place, and since the pains of the new birth had come upon him, he had often sought the shelter of its calm. A few yards from the wall of the rectory-garden stood an old yew-tree, and a little nearer on one side was a small thicket of cypress : between these and the wall was an ancient stone upon which he generally seated himself. It already had begun to be called the curate's chair. Most imagined him drawn thither by a clerical love of

passed, did it seem as if the man were by his side, and at times, in the stillness of the summer eve, when he walked alone, it seemed almost, as thoughts of revealing arose in his heart, that the Master himself was teaching him in spoken words. What need now to rack his soul in following the dim-seen, ever-vanishing paths of metaphysics? He had but to obey the prophet of life, the man whose being and doing and teaching were blended in one three-fold harmony—or, rather, were the three-fold analysis of one white essence—he had but to obey him, haunt his footsteps, and hearken after the sound of his spirit, and all truth would in healthy process be unfolded in himself. What philosophy could carry him where Jesus would carry his obedient friends—into his own peace, namely, far above all fear and all hate, where his soul should breathe such a high atmosphere of strength at once and repose, that he should love even his enemies, and that with no such love as condescendingly overlooks, but with the real, hearty, and self-involved affection that would die to give them the true life! Alas! how far was he from such perfection now—from such a martyrdom, lovely as endless, in the consuming fire of God! And at the thought, he fell from the heights of his contemplation—but was caught in the thicket of prayer.

By the time he reached his lodging, the glow had vanished, but the mood remained. He sat down and wrote the first sketch of the following verses, then found that his sermon had again drawn nigh and was within the reach of his spiritual tentacles.

Father, I cry to thee for bread,
With hungered longing, eager prayer ;
Thou hear'st, and givest me instead
More hunger and a half despair.

O Lord ! how long? My days decline
My youth is lapped in memories old
I need not bread alone, but wine—
See, cup and hand to thee I hold.

And yet thou givest : thanks, O Lord !
That still my heart with hunger faints !
The day will come when at thy board
I sit forgetting all my plaints.

If rain must come and winds must blow,
And I pore long o'er dim-seen chart,
Yet, Lord, let not the hunger go,
And keep the faintness at my heart.

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CHAPTER LXVII.

A SERMON TO LEOPOLD.



WHEN the curate stood up to read, his eyes as of themselves sought Mrs. Ramshorn's pew. There sat Helen, with a look that revealed, he thought, more of determination and less of suffering. Her aunt was by her side, cold and glaring, an ecclesiastical puss, ready to spring upon any small church-mouse that dared squeak in its own murine way. Bascombe was not visible, and that was a relief. For an unbelieving face, whether the dull, dining countenance of a mayor or the keen, searching countenance of a barrister, is a sad bone in the throat of utterance, and has to be of set will passed over, and, if that may be, forgotten. Wingfold tried hard to forget Mrs. Ramshorn's, and one or two besides, and by the time he came to the sermon, thought of nothing but human hearts, their agonies, and Him who came to call them to him.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

"Was it then of the sinners first our Lord thought ere he came from the bosom of the Father? Did the per-

fect will embrace, in the all-atoning tenderness of the divine heart, the degraded, disfigured, defiled, distorted thing, whose angel is too blind ever to see the face of its Father? Through all the hideous filth of the charnel-house which the passions had heaped upon her, did the Word recognize the bound, wing-lamed, feather-draggled Psyche, panting in horriblemst torture? Did he have a desire to the work of his hands, the child of his father's heart, and therefore, strong in compassion, speed to the painful rescue of hearts like his own? That purity and defilement should thus meet across all the great dividing gulf of law and morals! The friend of publicans and sinners! Think: he was absolutely friendly with them! was not shocked at them! held up no hands of dismay! Only they must do so no more.

“ If he were to come again visibly, now, which do you think would come crowding around him in greater numbers—the respectable church-goers or the people from the slums? I do not know. I dare not judge. But the fact that the church draws so few of those that are despised, of those whom Jesus drew and to whom most expressly he came, gives ground for question as to how far the church is like her Lord. Certainly many a one would find the way to the feet of the Master from whom the respectable church-goer, the Pharisee of our time, and the priest who stands on his profession, would draw back with disgust. And doubtless it would be in the religious world that a man like Jesus, who, without a professional education, a craftsman by birth and early training, uttered scarce a phrase indorsed by clerical

use, or a word of the religious cant of the day, but taught in simplest natural forms the eternal facts of faith and hope and love, would meet with the chief and perhaps the only *bitter* opponents of his doctrine and life.

“ But did our Lord not call the righteous ? Did he not call honest men about him—James and John and Simon—sturdy fisher-folk, who faced the night and the storm, worked hard, fared roughly, lived honestly, and led good, cleanly lives with father and mother or with wife and children ? I do not know that he said any thing special to convince them that they were sinners before he called them. But it is to be remarked that one of the first effects of his company upon Simon Peter was that the fisherman grew ashamed of himself, and while ashamed was yet possessed with an impulse of openness and honesty no less than passionate. The pure man should not be deceived as to what sort of company he was in ! ‘ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord ! ’ I would I could clearly behold with my mind’s eye what he then saw in Jesus that drew from him that cry ! He knew him for the Messiah : what was the working of the carpenter upon the fisherman that satisfied him of the fact ? Would the miracle have done it but for the previous talk from the boat to the people ? I think not. Anyhow, St. Peter judged himself among the sinners, and we may be sure that if these fishers had been self-satisfied men, they would not have left all and gone after Him who called them. Still it would hardly seem that it was specially as sinners that he did so. Again, did not men such as the Lord himself regarded as right-

eous come to him—Nicodemus, Nathaniel, the young man who came running and kneeled to him, the scribe who was not far from the kingdom, the centurion, in whom he found more faith than in any Jew, he who had built a synagogue in Capernaum, and sculptured on its lintel the pot of manna? These came to him, and we know he was ready to receive them. But he knew such would always come, drawn of the Father; they did not want much calling; they were not so much in his thoughts; therefore, he was not troubled about them; they were as the ninety-and-nine, the elder son at home, the money in the purse. Doubtless they had much to learn, were not yet in the kingdom, but they were crowding about its door. If I set it forth aright I know not, but thus it looks to me. And one thing I can not forget—it meets me in the face—that some at least—who knows if not all?—of the purest of men have counted themselves the greatest sinners! Neither can I forget that other saying of our Lord, a stumbling-block to many—our Lord was not so careful as perhaps some would have had him; lest men should stumble at the truth—*The first shall be last, and the last first.* While our Lord spoke the words, *The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service*, even then was Saul of Tarsus at the feet of Gamaliel, preparing to do God that service; but like one born out of due time, after all the rest he saw the Lord, and became the chief in labor and suffering. Thus the last became first. And I bethink me that the beloved disciple, he who leaned on the bosom of the Lord, who was bolder to ask him

than any—with the boldness of love, he whom the meek and lowly called a Son of Thunder, was the last of all to rejoin the Master in the mansions of his Father. Last or first—if only we are with him ! One thing is clear : that in the order of the Lord's business, first came sinners.

“ Who that reflects can fail to see this at least : that a crime brings a man face to face with the reality of things ? He who knows himself a sinner—I do not mean as one of the race : the most self-righteous man will allow that as a man he is a sinner—he to whom, in the words of the communion-service, the remembrance of his sins is grievous, and the burden of them intolerable, knows in himself that he is a lost man. He can no more hold up his head among his kind ; he can not look a woman or a child in the face ; he can not be left alone with the chaos of his thoughts and the monsters it momentarily breeds. The joys of his childhood, the delights of existence, are gone from him. There dwells within him an ever-present judgment and fiery indignation. Such a man will start at the sound of pardon and peace even as the camel of the desert at the scent of water. Therefore surely is such a man nearer to the gate of the kingdom than he against whom the world has never wagged a tongue, who never sinned against a social custom even, and has as easy a conscience as the day he was born, but who knows so little of himself that, while he thinks he is good enough, he carries within him the capacity and possibility of every cardinal sin, waiting only the special and fitting temptation which, like the match to

the charged mine, shall set all in a roar ! Of his danger he knows nothing, never dreams of praying against it, takes his seat in his pew Sunday after Sunday with his family, nor ever murmurs *Lead us not into temptation* with the least sense that temptation is a frightful thing, but repeats and responds and listens in perfect self-satisfaction, doubting never that a world made up of such as he must be a pleasant sight in the eyes of the Perfect. There are men who will never see what they are capable or in danger of until they have committed some fearful wrong. Nay, there are some for whom even that is not enough : they must be found out by their fellow-men, and scorned in the eyes of the world, before they can or will admit or comprehend their own disgrace. And there are worse still than these.

“ But a man may be oppressed by his sins, and hardly know what it is that oppresses him. There is more of sin in our burdens than we are ourselves aware. It needs not that we should have committed any grievous fault. Do we recognize in ourselves that which needs to be set right, that of which we ought to be ashamed, something which, were we lifted above all worldly anxieties, would yet keep us uneasy, dissatisfied, take the essential gladness out of the sunlight, make the fair face of the earth indifferent to us, a trustful glance a discomposing look, and death a darkness ? I say to the man who feels thus, whatever he may have done or left undone, he is not so far from the kingdom of heaven but that he may enter thereinto if he will.

“ And if there be here any soul withered up with

dismay, torn with horrible wonder that he should have done the deed which he yet hath done, to him I say, 'Flee from the self that hath sinned and hide thee with Christ in God.' Or, if the words sound to thee as the words of some unknown tongue, and I am to thee as one that beateth the air, I say instead, Call aloud in thy agony, that, if there be a God, he may hear the voice of his child and put forth his hand and lay hold upon him, and rend from him the garment that clings and poisons and burns, squeeze the black drop from his heart, and set him weeping like a summer rain. O blessed, holy, lovely repentance to which the Son of Man, the very root and man of men, hath come to call us! Good it is, and I know it. Come and repent with me, O heart wounded by thine own injustice and wrong, and together we will seek the merciful! Think not about thy sin so as to make it either less or greater in thine own eyes. Bring it to Jesus, and let him show thee how vile a thing it is. And leave it to him to judge thee, sure that he will judge thee justly, extenuating nothing; for he hath to cleanse thee utterly, and yet forgetting no smallest excuse that may cover the amazement of thy guilt, or witness for thee that not with open eyes didst thou do the deed. At the last he cried, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* For his enemies the truth should be spoken, his first words when they had nailed him to the cross. But again I say, Let it be Christ that excuseth thee; he will do it to more purpose than thou, and will

not wrong thy soul by excusing thee a hair too much, or thy heart by excusing thee a hair too little.

“ I dreamed once that I had committed a terrible crime. Carried beyond myself by passion, I knew not at the moment *how* evil was the thing I did. But I knew it was evil. And suddenly I became aware, when it was too late, of the nature of that which I had done. The horror that came with the knowledge was of the things that belong only to the secret soul. I was the same man as before I did it, yet was I now a man of whom my former self could not have conceived the possibility as dwelling within it. That former self seemed now by contrast lovely in purity, yet out of that seeming purity this fearful foul *I* of the present had just been born! The face of my fellow-man was an avenging law, the face of a just enemy. Where, how, should the frightful fact be hidden? The conscious earth must take it into its wounded bosom, and that before the all-seeing daylight should come. But it would come, and I should stand therein pointed at by every ray that shot through the sunny atmosphere!

“ The agony was of its own kind, and I have no word to tell what it was like. An evil odor and a sickening pain combined might be a symbol of the torture. As is in the nature of dreams, possibly I lay but a little second on the rack, yet an age seemed shot through and through with the burning meshes of that crime, while, cowering and terror-stricken, I tossed about the loathsome fact in my mind. I had *done* it, and from the done there was no escape: it was forevermore a thing

done. . . . Came a sudden change : I awoke. The sun stained with glory the curtains of my room, and the light of life darted keen as an arrow into my very soul. Glory to God ! I was innocent ! The stone was rolled from my sepulchre. With the darkness whence it had sprung, the cloud of my crime went heaving lurid away. I was a creature of the light and not of the dark. For me the sun shone and the wind blew ; for me the sea roared and the flowers sent up their odors. For me the earth had nothing to hide. My guilt was wiped away ; there was no red worm gnawing at my heart ; I could look my neighbor in the face, and the child of my friend might lay his hand in mine and not be defiled ! All day long the joy of that deliverance kept surging on in my soul.

“ But something yet more precious, more lovely than such an awaking, will repentance be to the sinner ; for after all it was but a dream of the night from which that set me free, and the spectre-deed that vanished had never had a place in the world of fact ; while the horror from which repentance delivers is no dream, but a stubborn, abiding reality. Again, the vanishing vision leaves the man what he was before, still capable, it may be, of committing the crime from which he is not altogether clean to whom in his sleep it was possible : repentance makes of the man a new creature, one who has awaked from the sleep of sin to sleep that sleep no more. The change in the one case is not for greatness comparable with that in the other. The sun that awakes from the one sleep is but the outward sun of our earthly life—a glorious,

indeed, and lovely thing, which yet even now is gathering a crust of darkness, blotting itself out and vanishing. The sun that awakes a man from the sleep of death is the living Sun that casts from his thought out into being that other sun, with the space wherein it holds its planetary court—the Father of lights, before whose shining in the inner world of truth eternal even the deeds of vice become as spectral dreams, and, with the night of godlessness that engendered them, flee away.

“But a man may answer and say to me, ‘Thou art but borne on the wings of thine imagination. The fact of the crime remains, let a man tear out his heart in repentance; and no awaking can restore an innocence which is indeed lost.’ I answer: The words thou speakest are in themselves true, yet thy ignorance makes them false. Thou knowest not the power of God, nor what resurrection from the dead means. What if, while it restored not thy former innocence, it brought thee a purity by the side of whose white splendor and inward preciousness the innocence thou hadst lost was but a bauble, being but a thing that turned to dross in the first furnace of its temptation? Innocence is indeed priceless—that innocence which God counteth innocence—but thine was a flimsy show, a bit of polished and cherished glass, instead of which, if thou repentest, thou shalt in thy jewel-box find a diamond. Is thy purity, O fair Psyche of the social world, upon whose wings no spattering shower has yet cast an earthy stain, and who knowest not yet whether there be any such thing as repentance or need of the same!—is thy

purity to compare with the purity of that heavenly Psyche, twice born, who even now in the twilight slumbers of heaven dreams that she washes with her tears the feet of her Lord, and wipes them with the hairs of her head? O bountiful God, who wilt give us back even our innocence ten-fold! He can give an awaking that leaves the past of the soul ten times farther behind than ever waking from sleep left the dreams of the night.

“ If the potency of that awaking lay in the inrush of a new billow of life fresh from its original source, carrying with it an enlargement of the whole nature and its every part, a glorification of every faculty, every sense even, so that the man, forgetting nothing of his past or its shame, should yet cry out in the joy of his second birth, ‘ Lo! I am a new man; I am no more he who did that awful and evil thing, for I am no more capable of doing it! God be praised, for all is well!’—would not such an awaking send the past afar into the dim distance of the first creation, and wrap the ill deed in the clean linen cloth of forgiveness, even as the dull creature of the sea rolls up the grain of intruding sand in the lovely garment of a pearl? Such an awaking means God himself in the soul, not disdaining closest vital company with the creature he foresaw and created. And the man knows in full content that he is healed of his plague. Nor would he willingly lose the scars which record its outbreak, for they tell him what he is without God, and set him ever looking to see that the door into the heavenly garden stand wide for God to enter the house

when it pleases him. And who can tell whether in the train of such an awaking may not follow a thousand opportunities and means of making amends to those whom he has injured?

“Nor must I fail to remind the man who has committed no grievous crime, that except he has repented of his evil self and abjured all wrong, he is not safe from any even the worst offence. There was a time when I could not understand that he who loved not his brother was a murderer: now I see it to be no figure of speech, but, in the realities of man’s moral and spiritual nature, an absolute simple fact. The murderer and the unloving sit on the same bench before the judge of eternal truth. The man who loves not his brother I do not say is at this moment capable of killing him, but if the natural working of his unlove be not checked, he will assuredly become capable of killing him. Until we love our brother—yes, until we love our enemy, who is yet our brother—we contain within ourselves the undeveloped germ of murder. And so with every sin in the tables or out of the tables. There is not one in this congregation who has a right to cast a look of reproach at the worst felon who ever sat in the prisoner’s dock. I speak no hyperbole, but simple truth. We are very ready to draw in our minds a distinction between respectable sins—human imperfections we call them, perhaps—and disreputable vices, such as theft and murder; but there is no such distinction in fact. Many a thief is a better man than many a clergyman, and miles nearer to the gate of the kingdom. The heavenly order goes

upon other principles than ours, and there are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first. Only, at the root of all human bliss lies repentance.

“Come then at the call of the Waker, the Healer, the Giver of repentance and light, the Friend of publicans and sinners, all ye on whom lies the weight of a sin or the gathered heap of a thousand crimes! He came to call such as you that he might make you clear and clean. He can not bear that you should live on in such misery, such badness, such blackness of darkness. He would give you again your life, the bliss of your being. He will not speak to you one word of reproach, except, indeed, you should aim at justifying yourselves by accusing your neighbor. He will leave it to those who cherish the same sins in their hearts to cast stones at you: he who has no sin casts no stone. Heartily he loves you, heartily he hates the evil in you—so heartily that he will even cast you into the fire to burn you clean. By making you clean he will give you rest. If he upbraid, it will not be for past sin, but for the present little faith, holding out to him an acorn-cup to fill. The rest of you, keep aloof, if you will, until you shall have done some deed that compels you to cry out for deliverance; but you that know yourselves sinners, come to him that he may work in you his perfect work, for he came not to call the righteous, but sinners—us, you and me—to repentance.”

CHAPTER LXVIII.

AFTER THE SERMON.



As the sermon drew to a close, and the mist of his emotion began to disperse, individual faces of his audience again dawned out on the preacher's ken. Mr. Drew's head was down. As I have already said, certain things he had been taught in his youth and had practised in his manhood, certain mean ways counted honest enough in the trade, had become to him, regarded from the ideal point of the divine in merchandise—such a merchandise, namely, as the share the Son of Man might have taken in buying and selling, had his reputed father been a shopkeeper instead of a carpenter—absolutely hateful, and the memory of them intolerable. Nor did it relieve him much to remind himself of the fact that he knew not to the full the nature of the advantages he took, for he knew that he had known them such as shrank from the light, not coming thereto to be made manifest. He was now doing his best to banish them from his business, and yet they were a painful presence to his spirit—so grievous to be borne

that the prospect held out by the preacher of an absolute and final deliverance from them, by the indwelling presence of the God of all living men and true merchants, was a blessedness unspeakable. Small was the suspicion in the Abbey Church of Glaston, that morning, that the well-known successful man of business was weeping. Who could once have imagined another reason for the laying of that round, good-humored, contented face down on the book-board than pure drowsiness from lack of work-day interest? Yet there was a human soul crying out after its birthright. Oh! to be clean as a mountain river! clean as the air above the clouds or on the middle seas! as the throbbing æther that fills the gulf betwixt star and star!—nay, as the thought of the Son of Man himself, who, to make all things new and clean, stood up against the whole battery of sin-sprung suffering, withstanding and enduring and stilling the recoil of the awful force wherewith his Father had launched the worlds, and given birth to human souls with wills that might become free as his own.

While Wingfold had been speaking in general terms, with the race in his mind's, and the congregation in his body's eye, he had yet thought more of one soul, with its one crime and its intolerable burden, than of all the rest: Leopold was ever present to him, and while he strove to avoid absorption in a personal interest however justifiable, it was of necessity that the thought of the most burdened sinner he knew should color the whole of his utterance. At times, indeed, he felt as if he were speaking to him immediately, and to him only; at others, al-

though then he saw her no more than him, that he was comforting the sister individually, in holding out to her brother the mighty hope of a restored purity. And when once more his mind could receive the messages brought home by his eyes, he saw upon Helen's face the red sunset of a rapt listening. True, it was already fading away, but the eyes had wept, the glow yet hung about cheek and forehead, and the firm mouth had forgotten itself into a tremulous form, which the stillness of absorption had there for the moment fixed.

But even already, although he could not yet read it upon her countenance, a snake had begun to lift its head from the chaotic swamp which runs a creek at least into every soul, the rudimentary desolation, a remnant of the time when the world was without form and void. And the snake said, "Why then did he not speak like that to my Leopold? Why did he not comfort him with such a good hope, well becoming a priest of the gentle Jesus? Or, if he fancied he must speak of confession, why did he not speak of it in plain, honest terms, instead of suggesting the idea of it so that the poor boy imagined it came from his own spirit, and must therefore be obeyed as the will of God?"

So said the snake; and by the time Helen had walked home with her aunt, the glow had sunk from her soul, and a gray, wintry mist had settled down upon her spirit. And she said to herself that if this last hope in George should fail her, she would not allow the matter to trouble her any further; she was a free woman, and, as Leopold had chosen other counsellors, had thus de-

clared her unworthy of confidence, and, after all that she had suffered and done for love of him, had turned away from her, she would put money in her pursè, set out for France or Italy, and leave him to the fate, whatever it might be, which his new advisers and his own obstinacy might bring upon him. Was the innocent bound to share the shame of the guilty? Had she not done enough? Would even her father require more of her than she had already done and endured?

When, therefore, she went into Leopold's room, and his eyes sought her from the couch, she took no notice that he had got up and dressed while she was at church; and he knew that a cloud had come between them, and that after all she had borne and done for him, he and his sister were now farther apart, for the time at least, than when oceans lay betwixt their birth and their meeting; and he found himself looking back with vague longing even to the terrible old house of Glaston, and the sharing of their agony therein. His eyes followed her as she walked across to the dressing-room, and the tears rose and filled them, but he said nothing. And the sister who, all the time of the sermon, had been filled with wave upon wave of wishing—that Poldie could hear this, could hear that, could have such a thought to comfort him, such a lovely word to drive the horror from his soul—now cast on him a chilly glance, and said never a word of the things to which she had listened with such heavings of the spirit-ocean; for she felt, with an instinct more righteous than her will, that they would but strengthen him in his determination to do whatever the

teacher of them might approve. As she repassed him to go to the drawing-room, she did indeed say a word of kindness ; but it was in a forced tone, and was only about his dinner ! His eyes overflowed, but he shut his lips so tight that his mouth grew grim with determination, and no more tears came.

To the friend who joined her at the church-door, and, in George Bascombe's absence, walked with them along Pine street, Mrs. Ramshorn remarked that the curate was certainly a most dangerous man—particularly for young people to hear—he so confounded all the landmarks of right and wrong, representing the honest man as no better than the thief, and the murderer as no worse than anybody else—teaching people, in fact, that the best thing they could do was to commit some terrible crime, in order thereby to attain to a better innocence than without it could ever be theirs. How far she mistook, or how far she knew or suspected that she spoke falsely, I will not pretend to know. But although she spoke as she did, there was something, either in the curate or in the sermon, that had quieted her a little, and she was less contemptuous in her condemnation of him than usual.

Happily both for himself and others, the curate was not one of those who cripple the truth and blind their own souls by

some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on the event—

A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom,

And ever three parts coward ;

and hence, in proportion as he roused the honest, he gave occasion to the dishonest to cavil and condemn. Imagine St. Paul having a prevision of how he would be misunderstood, *and heeding it!*—what would then have become of all those his most magnificent outbursts? And would any amount of apostolic carefulness have protected him? I suspect it would only have given rise to more vulgar misunderstandings and misrepresentations still. To explain to him who loves not, is but to give him the more plentiful material for misinterpretation. Let a man have truth in the inward parts, and out of the abundance of his heart let his mouth speak. If then he should have ground to fear honest misunderstanding, let him preach again to enforce the truth for which he is jealous, and if it should seem to any that the two utterances need reconciling, let those who would have them consist reconcile them for themselves.

The reason of George Bascombe's absence from church that morning was that, after an early breakfast, he had mounted Helen's mare and set out to call on Mr. Hooker before he should have gone to church. Helen expected him back to dinner, and was anxiously looking for him. So also was Leopold, but the hopes of the two were different.

At length the mare's hoofs echoed through all Sunday Glaston, and presently George rode up. The groom took his horse in the street, and he came into the drawing-room. Helen hastened to meet him.

"Well, George?" she said anxiously.

"Oh! it's all right!—will be at least, I am sure. I will

tell you all about it in the garden after dinner. Aunt has the good sense never to interrupt us there," he added. "I'll just run and show myself to Leopold: he must not suspect I am of your party and playing him false. Not that it is false, you know! for two negatives make a positive, and to fool a madman is to give him fair play."

The words jarred sorely on Helen's ear.

Bascombe hurried to Leopold and informed him that he had seen Mr. Hooker, and that all was arranged for taking him over to his place on Tuesday morning, if by that time he should be able for the journey.

"Why not to-morrow?" said Leopold. "I am quite able."

"Oh! I told him you were not very strong. And he wanted a run after the hounds to-morrow. So we judged it better put off till Tuesday."

Leopold gave a sigh, and said no more.

CHAPTER LXIX.

BASCOMBE AND THE MAGISTRATE.



AFTER dinner the cousins went to the summer-house, and there George gave Helen his report, revealing his plan and hope for Leopold.

“Such fancies must be humored, you know, Helen. There is nothing to be gained by opposing them,” he said.

Helen looked at him with keen eyes, and he returned the gaze. The confidence betwixt them was not perfect: each was doubtful as to the thought of the other, and neither asked what it was.

“A fine old cock is Mr. Hooker!” said George; “a jolly, good-natured, brick-faced squire; a Tory, of course, and a sound churchman; as simple as a baby, and took every thing I told him without a hint of doubt or objection—just the sort of man I expected to find him! When I mentioned my name, etc., he found he had known my father, and that gave me a good start. Then

I lauded his avenue, and apologized for troubling him so early and on Sunday too, but said it was a pure work of mercy in which I begged his assistance—as a magistrate, I added, lest he should fancy I had come after a subscription. It was a very delicate case, I said, in which were concerned the children of a man of whom he had, I believed, at one time known something—General Lingard. ‘To be sure!’ he cried; ‘I knew him very well; a fine fellow, but hasty, sir—hasty in his temper!’ I said I had never known him myself, but one of his children was my cousin; the other was the child of his second wife, a Hindoo lady, unfortunately, and it was about him I presumed to trouble him. Then I plunged into the matter at once, telling him that Leopold had had violent brain-fever, brought on by a horrible drug the use of which, if use I dared call it, he had learned in India; and that, although he had recovered from the fever, it was very doubtful if ever he would recover from the consequences of it, for that he had become the prey of a fixed idea, the hard deposit from a heated imagination. ‘And pray what is the idea?’ he asked. ‘Neither more nor less,’ I answered, ‘than that he is a murderer!’—‘God bless me!’ he cried, somewhat to my alarm, for I had been making all this preamble to prejudice the old gentleman in the right direction, lest afterwards Leopold’s plausibility might be too much for him. So I echoed the spirit of his exclamation, declaring it was one of the saddest things I had ever known, that a fellow of such sweet and gentle nature, one utterly incapable of unkindness, not to say violence, should be

so possessed by misery and remorse for a phantom deed, no more his than if he had but dreamed it, a thing he not only did not do, but never could have done. I had not yet, however, told him, I said, what was perhaps the saddest point in the whole sad story—namely, that the attack had been brought on by the news of the actual murder of a lady to whom he had been passionately attached; the horror of it had unhinged his reason, then turned and fastened upon his imagination; so that he was now convinced, beyond the reach of argument or even the clearest proof, that it was his own hand that drove the knife to her heart. Then I recalled to his memory the case as reported, adding that the fact of the murderer's prolonged evasion of justice appeared, by some curious legerdemain of his excited fancy, if not to have suggested—of that I was doubtful—yet to have ripened his conviction of guilt. Now nothing would serve him but he must give himself up, confess—no, that was not a true word in his case—accuse himself of the crime, and meet his fate on the gallows, 'in the hope, observe, my dear sir,' I said, 'of finding her in the other world, and there making it up with her!' 'God bless me!' he cried again, in a tone of absolute horror. And every now and then, while I spoke, he would ejaculate something; and still as he listened, his eyes grew more and more bloodshot with interest and compassion. 'Ah, I see!' he said then; 'you want to send him to a mad-house. Don't do it,' he continued, in a tone of expostulation, almost entreaty. 'Poor boy! He may get over it. Let his friends look to him

He has a sister, you say?' I quickly reassured him, telling him such was no one's desire, and saying I would come to the point in a moment, only there was one thing more which had interested me greatly, as revealing how a brain in such a condition will befool itself, all but generating two individualities. There I am afraid I put my foot in it, but he was far too simple to see it was cloven—ha! ha!—and I hastened to remark that, as a magistrate, he must have had numberless opportunities of noting similar phenomena. He waved his hand in deprecation, and I hastened to remark that, up to a certain point, whatever hint the newspapers had given, Leopold had expanded and connected with every other, but that at one part of the story I had found him entirely at fault: he could not tell what he did, where he went, or how he had felt first after the deed was done. He confessed all after that was a blank until he found himself in bed. But when I told him something he had not seen—which his worship might remember—the testimony, namely, of the coast-guardsman—about the fishing-boat with the two men in it—I had here to refresh his memory as to the whole of that circumstance, and did so by handing him the newspaper containing it—that was what I made you give me the paper for. I have lost the thread of my sentence, but never mind. I told him then something I have not told you yet, Helen—namely, that when I happened to allude to that portion of the story, Leopold started up with flashing eyes, and exclaimed, Now I remember! It all comes back to me as clear as day. I remember running down the hill,

and jumping into the boat just as they shoved off. I was exhausted and fell down in the stern. When I came to myself, the two men were forward: I saw their legs through beneath the sails. I thought they would be sure to give me up, and at once I slipped overboard. The water revived me, but when I reached the shore I fell down again, and lay there I don't know how long. Indeed I don't remember any thing more except confusedly.' That is what Leopold said, and what I now told Mr. Hooker. Then at last I opened my mind to him as to wherein I ventured to ask his assistance; and my petition was that he would allow me to bring Leopold, and would let him go through the form of giving himself up to justice. Especially I begged that he would listen to all he had to say, and give no sign that he doubted his story. 'And then, sir,' I concluded, 'I would leave it to you to do what we can not—reconcile him to going home instead of to prison.'

"He sat with his head on his hand for a while, as if pondering some weighty question of law. Then he said suddenly, 'It is now almost church-time. I will think the matter over. You may rely upon me. Will you take a seat in my pew, and dine with us after?' I excused myself on the ground that I must return at once to poor Leopold, who was anxiously looking for me. And you must forgive me, Helen, and not fancy me misusing Fanny, if I did yield to the temptation of a little longer ride. I have scarcely more than walked her, with a canter now and then when we had the chance of a bit of turf."

Helen assured him with grateful eyes that she knew Fanny was as safe with him as with herself, and she felt such a gush of gratitude follow the revival of hope, that she was nearer being in love with her cousin than ever before. Her gratitude inwardly delighted George, and he thought the light in her blue eyes lovelier than ever; but although strongly tempted, he judged it better to delay a formal confession until circumstances should be more comfortable.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE CONFESSION



ALL that and the following day Leopold was in spirits for him wonderful. On Monday night there came a considerable reaction: he was dejected, worn, and weary. Twelve o'clock the next day was the hour appointed for their visit to Mr. Hooker, and at eleven he was dressed and ready—restless, agitated, and very pale, but not a whit less determined than at first. A drive was the pretext for borrowing Mrs. Ramshorn's carriage.

"Why is Mr. Wingfold not coming?" asked Lingard anxiously, when it began to move.

"I fancy we shall be quite as comfortable without him, Poldie," said Helen. "Did you expect him?"

"He promised to go with me. But he hasn't called since the time was fixed." Here Helen looked out of the window. "I can't think why it is. I can do my duty without him, though," continued Leopold, "and perhaps it is just as well. Do you know, George, since I made up my mind I have seen her but once, and that was last night, and only in a dream."

"A state of irresolution is one peculiarly open to un-

healthy impressions," said George, good-naturedly disposing of his long legs so that they should be out of the way.

Leopold turned from him to his sister.

"The strange thing, Helen," he said, "was that I did not feel the least afraid of her, or even abashed before her. 'I see you,' I said. 'Be at peace. I am coming; and you shall do to me what you will.' And then—what do you think?—O my God! she smiled one of her own old smiles—only sad, too, very sad—and vanished. I woke, and she seemed only to have just left the room, for there was a stir in the darkness. Do you believe in ghosts, George?"

Leopold was not one of George's initiated, I need hardly say.

"No," answered Bascombe.

"I don't wonder. I can't blame you, for neither did I once. But just wait till you have made one, George!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Bascombe, a second time forgetting himself.

"Amen!" said Leopold; "for after that there's no help but be one yourself, you know."

"If he would only talk like that to old Hooker!" thought George. "It would go a long way to forestall any possible misconception of the case."

"I can't think why Mr. Wingfold did not come yesterday," resumed Leopold. "I made sure he would."

"Now, Poldie, you mustn't talk," said Helen, "or you'll be exhausted before we get to Mr. Hooker's."

She did not wish the non-appearance of the curate on

Monday to be closely inquired into. His company at the magistrate's was by all possible means to be avoided.

George had easily persuaded Helen—more easily than he expected—to wait their return in the carriage, and the two men were shown into the library, where the magistrate presently joined them. He would have shaken hands with Leopold as well as George, but the conscious felon drew back.

“No, sir; excuse me,” he said. “Hear what I have to tell you first; and if after that you will shake hands with me, it will be a kindness indeed. But you will not! you will not!”

Worthy Mr. Hooker was overwhelmed with pity at sight of the worn, sallow face with the great eyes, in which he found every appearance confirmatory of the tale wherewith Bascombe had filled and prejudiced every fibre of his judgment. He listened in the kindest way while the poor boy forced the words of his confession from his throat. But Leopold never dreamed of attributing his emotion to any other cause than compassion for one who had been betrayed into such a crime. It was against his will—for he seemed now bent, even to unreason, on fighting every weakness—that he was prevailed upon to take a little wine. Having ended, he sat silent, in the posture of one whose wrists are already clasped by the double bracelet of steel.

Now Mr. Hooker had thought the thing out in church on the Sunday; and after a hard run at the tail of a strong fox over a rough country on the Monday, and a

good sleep well into the morning of the Tuesday, could see no better way. His device was simple enough.

"My dear young gentleman," he said, "I am very sorry for you, but I must do my duty."

"That, sir, is what I came to you for," answered Leopold humbly.

"Then you must consider yourself my prisoner. The moment you are gone, I shall make notes of your deposition, and proceed to arrange for the necessary formalities. As a mere matter of form, I shall take your own bail in a thousand pounds to surrender when called upon."

"But I am not of age, and haven't got a thousand pounds," said Leopold.

"Perhaps Mr. Hooker will accept my recognizance in the amount?" said Bascombe.

"Certainly," answered Mr. Hooker, and wrote something which Bascombe signed.

"You are very good, George," said Leopold. "But you know I can't run away if I would," he added, with a pitiful attempt at a smile.

"I hope you will soon be better," said the magistrate kindly.

"Why such a wish, sir?" returned Leopold, almost reproachfully, and the good man stood abashed before him.

He thought of it afterwards, and was puzzled to know how it was.

"You must hold yourself in readiness," he said, recovering himself with an effort, "to give yourself up at

any moment. And, remember, I shall call upon you when I please, every week perhaps, or oftener, to see that you are safe. Your aunt is an old friend of mine, and there will be no need of explanations. This turns out to be no common case, and after hearing the whole, I do not hesitate to offer you my hand."

Leopold was overcome by his kindness, and withdrew speechless, but greatly relieved.

Several times during the course of his narrative, its apparent truthfulness and its circumstantiality went nigh to stagger Mr. Hooker; but a glance at Bascombe's face, with its half-amused smile, instantly set him right again, and he thought with dismay how near he had been to letting himself be fooled by a madman.

Again in the carriage, Leopold laid his head on Helen's shoulder, and looked up in her face with such a smile as she had never seen on his before. Certainly there was something in confession—if only enthusiasts like Mr. Wingfold would not spoil all by pushing things to extremes and turning good into bad!

Leopold was yet such a child, had so little occupied himself with things about him, and had been so entirely taken up with his passion and the poetry of existence unlawfully forced, that if his knowledge of the circumstances of Emmeline's murder had depended on the newspapers, he would have remained in utter ignorance concerning them. From the same causes he was so entirely unacquainted with the modes of criminal procedure, that the conduct of the magistrate never struck him as strange, not to say illegal. And so strongly did

he feel the good man's kindness and sympathy, that his comfort from making a clean breast of it was even greater than he had expected. Before they reached home he was fast asleep. When laid on his couch, he almost instantly fell asleep again, and Helen saw him smile as he slept.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE MASK.

BUT although such was George Bascombe's judgment of Leopold, and such his conduct of his affair, he could not prevent the recurrent intrusion of the flickering doubt which had shown itself when first he listened to the story. Amid all the wildness of the tale there was yet a certain air not merely of truthfulness in the narrator—that was not to be questioned—but of verisimilitude in the narration, which had its effect, although it gave rise to no conscious exercise of discriminating or ponderating faculty. Leopold's air of conviction also, although of course that might well accompany the merest invention rooted in madness, yet had its force, persistently as George pooh-poohed it—which he did the more strenuously from the intense, even morbid, abhorrence of his nature to being taken in, and having to confess himself of unstable intellectual equilibrium. Possibly this was not the only kind of thing in which the sensitiveness of a vanity he would himself have disowned, had rendered

him unfit for perceiving the truth. Nor do I know how much there may be to choose between the two shames—that of accepting what is untrue and that of refusing what is true.

The second time he listened to Leopold's continuous narrative, the doubt returned with more clearness and less flicker; there was such a thing as being overwise: might he not be taking himself in with his own incredulity? Ought he not to apply some test? And did Leopold's story offer any means of doing so? One thing, he then found, had been dimly haunting his thoughts ever since he heard it: Leopold affirmed that he had thrown his cloak and mask down an old pit-shaft, close by the place of murder. If there was such a shaft, could it be searched? Recurring doubt at length so wrought upon his mind that he resolved to make his holiday excursion to that neighborhood, and there endeavor to gain what assurance of any sort might be to be had. What end beyond his own possible satisfaction the inquiry was to answer he did not ask himself. The restless spirit of the detective, so often conjoined with indifference to what is in its own nature true, was at work in him; but that was not all: he must know the very facts, if possible, of whatever concerned Helen. I shall not follow his proceedings closely: it is with their reaction upon Leopold that I have to do.

The house where the terrible thing took place was not far from a little moorland village. There Bascombe found a small inn, where he took up his quarters, pre-

tending to be a geologist out for a holiday. He soon came upon the disused shaft.

The inn was a good deal frequented in the evenings by the colliers of the district—a rough race, but not beyond the influences of such an address, mingled of self-assertion and good-fellowship, as Bascombe brought to bear upon them, for he had soon perceived that amongst them he might find the assistance he wanted. In the course of conversation, therefore, he mentioned the shaft, on which he pretended to have come in his rambles. Remarking on the danger of such places, he learned that this one served for ventilation, and was still accessible below from other workings. Thereafter he begged permission to go down one of the pits, on pretext of examining the coal-strata, and having secured for his guide one of the most intelligent of those whose acquaintance he had made at the inn, persuaded him, partly by expressions of incredulity because of the distance between, to guide him to the bottom of the shaft whose accessibility he maintained. That they were going in the right direction, he had the testimony of a little compass he carried at his watch-chain, and at length he saw a faint gleam before him. When at last he raised his head, wearily bent beneath the low roofs of the passages, and looked upwards, there was a star looking down at him out of the sky of day! But George never wasted time in staring at what was above his head, and so began instantly to search about as if examining the indications of the strata. Was it possible! Could it be? There was a piece of black something that was not coal

and seemed textile ! It was a half-mask, for there were the eyeholes in it ! He caught it up and hurried it into his bag—not so quickly but that the haste set his guide speculating. And Bascombe saw that the action was noted. The man afterwards offered to carry his bag, but he would not allow him.

The next morning he left the place and returned to London, taking Glaston, by a detour, on his way. A few questions to Leopold drew from him a description of the mask he had worn, entirely corresponding with the one George had found ; and at length he was satisfied that there was truth more than a little in Leopold's confession. It was not his business, however, he now said to himself, to set magistrates right. True, he had set Mr. Hooker wrong in the first place, but he had done it in good faith, and how could he turn traitor to Helen and her brother ? Besides, he was sure the magistrate himself would be any thing but obliged to him for opening his eyes ! At the same time, Leopold's fanatic eagerness after confession might drive the matter further, and if so, it might become awkward for him. He might be looked to for the defence, and were he not certain that his guide had marked his concealment of what he had picked up, he might have ventured to undertake it, for certainly it would have been a rare chance for a display of the forensic talent he believed himself to possess ; but as it was, the moment he was called to the bar—which would be within a fortnight—he would go abroad, say to Paris, and there, for twelve months or so, await events.

When he disclosed to Helen his evil success in the

coal-pit, it was but the merest film of a hope it destroyed, for she *knew* that her brother was guilty. George and she now felt that they were linked by the possession of a common secret.

But the cloak had been found a short time before, and was in the possession of Emmeline's mother. That mother was a woman of strong passions and determined character. The first shock of the catastrophe over, her grief was almost supplanted by a rage for vengeance, in the compassing of which no doubt she vaguely imagined she would be doing something to right her daughter. Hence the protracted concealment of the murderer was bitterness to her soul, and she vowed herself to discovery and revenge as the one business of her life. In this her husband, a good deal broken by the fearful event, but still more by misfortunes of another kind which had begun to threaten him, offered her no assistance, and indeed felt neither her passion urge him nor her perseverance hold him to the pursuit.

In the neighborhood her mind was well known, and not a few found their advantage in supplying her passion with the fuel of hope. Any hint of evidence, however small, the remotest suggestion even towards discovery, they would carry at once to her; for she was an open-handed woman, and in such case would give with a profusion that, but for the feeling concerned, would have been absurd, and did expose her to the greed of every lying mendicant within reach of her. Not unnaturally, therefore, it had occurred to a certain collier to make his way to the bottom of the shaft, on the chance

—hardly of finding, but of being enabled to invent something worth reporting; and there, to the very fooling of his barren expectation, he had found the cloak.

The mother had been over to Holland, where she had instituted unavailing inquiries in the villages along the coast and among the islands, and had been home but a few days when the cloak was carried to her. In her mind it immediately associated itself with the costumes of the horrible ball, and at once she sought the list of her guests thereat. It was before her at the very moment when the man who had been Bascombe's guide sent in to request an interview, the result of which was to turn her attention for the time in another direction: Who might the visitor to the mine have been?

Little was to be gathered in the neighborhood beyond the facts that the letters G B were on his carpet-bag, and that a scrap of torn envelope bore what seemed the letters *mple*. She despatched the poor indications to an inquiry-office in London.

CHAPTER LXXII.

FURTHER DECISION



THE day after his confession to Mr. Hooker, a considerable reaction took place in Lingard. He did not propose to leave his bed, and lay exhausted. He said he had caught cold. He coughed a little; wondered why Mr. Wingfold did not come to see him; dozed a good deal, and often woke with a start. Mrs. Ramshorn thought Helen ought to make him get up: nothing, she said, could be worse for him than lying in bed; but Helen thought, even if her aunt were right, he must be humored. The following day Mr. Hooker called, inquired after him, and went up to his room to see him. There he said all he could think of to make him comfortable; repeated that certain preliminaries had to be gone through before the commencement of the prosecution; said that while these went on, it was better he should be in his sister's care than in prison, where, if he went at once, he most probably would die before the trial came on; that in the meantime he was responsible for him; that, although he had done quite right in giving himself up, he

must not let what was done and could no more be helped prey too much upon his mind, lest it should render him unable to give his evidence with proper clearness, and he should be judged insane and sent to Broadmoor, which would be frightful. He ended by saying that he had had great provocation, and that he was certain the judge would consider it in passing sentence, only he must satisfy the jury there had been no premeditation.

"I will not utter a word to excuse myself, Mr. Hooker," replied Leopold.

The worthy magistrate smiled sadly, and went away, if possible more convinced than ever of the poor lad's insanity.

The visit helped Leopold over that day, but when the next also passed, and neither did Wingfold appear nor any explanation of his absence reach him, he made up his mind to act again for himself.

The cause of the curate's apparent neglect, though ill to find, was not far to seek.

On the Monday he had, upon some pretext or other, been turned away; on the Tuesday he had been told Mr. Lingard was gone for a drive; on the Wednesday, that he was much too tired to be seen; and thereupon had at length judged it better to leave things to right themselves. If Leopold did not want to see him, it would be of no use by persistence to force his way to him; while, on the other hand, if he did want to see him, he felt convinced the poor fellow would manage to have his own way somehow.

The next morning after he had thus resolved, Leopold declared himself better, and got up and dressed. He then lay on the sofa and waited as quietly as he could until Helen went out—Mr. Faber insisting she should do so every day. It was no madness, but a burning desire for life, coupled with an utter carelessness of that which is commonly called life, that now ruled his behavior. He tied his slippers on his feet, put on his smoking-cap, crept unseen from the house, and took the direction of the Abbey. The influence of the air, by his weakness rendered intoxicating, the strange look of every thing around him, the nervous excitement of every human approach, kept him up until he reached the churchyard, across which he was crawling to find the curate's lodging, when suddenly his brain seemed to go swimming away into regions beyond the senses. He attempted to seat himself on a gravestone, but lost consciousness, and fell at full length between that and the next one.

When Helen returned, she was horrified to find that he was gone—when or whither nobody knew: no one had missed him. Her first fear was the river, but her conscience enlightened her, and her shame could not prevent her from seeking him at the curate's. In her haste she passed him where he lay.

Shown into the curate's study, she gave a hurried glance around, and her anxiety became terror again.

"O Mr. Wingfold!" she cried, "where is Leopold?"

"I have not seen him," replied the curate, turning pale.

"Then he has thrown himself in the river!" cried Helen, and sank on a chair.

The curate caught up his hat.

"You wait here," he said. "I will go and look for him."

But Helen rose, and without another word they set off together, and again entered the churchyard. As they hurried across it, the curate caught sight of something on the ground, and springing forward, found Leopold.

"He is dead!" cried Helen in an agony, when she saw him stop and stoop.

He looked dead indeed; but what appalled her the most reassured Wingfold a little: blood had flowed freely from a cut on his eyebrow.

The curate lifted him—no hard task—out of the damp shadow, and laid him on the stone, which was warm in the sun, with his head on Helen's lap, then ran to order the carriage, and hastened back with brandy. They got a little into his mouth, but he could not swallow it; still it seemed to do him good, for presently he gave a deep sigh, and just then they heard the carriage stop at the gate. Wingfold took him up, carried him to it, got in with him in his arms, and held him on his knees until they reached the manor-house, when he carried him up-stairs and laid him on the sofa. When they had brought him round a little, he undressed him and put him to bed.

"Do not leave me," murmured Leopold, just as Helen entered the room; and she heard it.

Wingfold looked to her for the answer he was to

make. Her bearing was much altered : she was both ashamed and humbled.

“ Yes, Leopold,” she said, “ Mr. Wingfold will, I am sure, stay with you as long as he can.”

“ Indeed I will,” assented the curate. “ But I must run for Mr. Faber first.”

“ How did I come here ?” asked Leopold, opening his eyes large upon Helen after swallowing a spoonful of the broth she held to his lips. But before she could answer him he turned sick, and by the time the doctor came was very feverish. Faber gave the necessary directions, and Wingfold walked back with him to get his prescription made up.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE CURATE AND THE DOCTOR.



HERE is something strange about that young man's illness," said Faber, as soon as they had left the house. "I fancy you know more than you can tell; and if so, then I have committed no indiscretion in saying as much."

"Perhaps it might be an indiscretion to acknowledge as much, however," said the curate, with a smile.

"You are right. I have not been long in the place," returned Faber, "and you have had no opportunity of testing me. But I am indifferent honest as well as you, though I don't go with you in every thing."

"People would have me believe you don't go with me in any thing."

"They say as much, do they?" returned Faber, with some annoyance. "I thought I had been careful not to trespass on your preserves."

"As for preserves, I don't know of any," answered the curate. "There is no true bird in the grounds that

won't manage somehow to escape the snare of the fowler."

"Well," said the doctor, "I know nothing about God and all that kind of thing, but, though I don't think I'm a coward exactly either, I know I should like to have your pluck."

"I haven't got any pluck," said the curate.

"Tell that to the marines," said Faber. "I daren't go and say what I think or don't think even in the bedroom of my least orthodox patient—at least, if I do, I instantly repent it—while you go on saying what you really believe Sunday after Sunday! How you can believe it I don't know, and it's no business of mine."

"Oh! yes it is!" returned Wingfold. "But as to the pluck, it may be a man's duty to say in the pulpit what he would be just as wrong to say by a sick-bed."

"That has nothing to do with the pluck! That's all I care about."

"It has every thing to do with what you take for pluck. My pluck is only Don Worm."

"I don't know what you mean by that."

"It's Benedick's name, in *Much Ado about Nothing* for the conscience. My pluck is nothing but my conscience."

"It's a damned fine thing to have anyhow, whatever name you put upon it!" said Faber.

"Excuse me if I find your epithet more amusing than apt," said Wingfold, laughing.

"You are quite right," said Faber. "I apologize."

"As to the pluck again," Wingfold resumed, "if you

think of this one fact: that my whole desire is to believe in God, and that the only thing I can be sure of sometimes is that, if there be a God, none but an honest man will ever find him: you will not then say there is much pluck in my speaking the truth?"

"I don't see that that makes it a hair easier, in the face of such a set of gaping noodles as—"

"I beg your pardon: there is more lack of conscience than of brains in the Abbey of a Sunday, I fear."

"Well, all I have to say is, I can't for the life of me see what you want to believe in a God for! It seems to me the world would go on rather better without any such fancy. Look here, now: there is young Spenser—out there at Horwood—a patient of mine. His wife died yesterday—one of the loveliest young creatures you ever saw. The poor fellow is as bad about it as fellow can be. Well, he's one of your sort, and said to me the other day, just as you would have him, 'It's the will of God, he said, 'and we must hold our peace.' 'Don't talk to me about God,' I said, for I couldn't stand it. 'Do you mean to tell me that if there was a God, he would have taken such a lovely creature as that away from her husband and her helpless infant at the age of two-and-twenty? I scorn to believe it.'"

"What did he say to that?"

"He turned as white as death, and said never a word."

"Ah! you forgot that you were taking from him his only hope of seeing her again!"

"I certainly did not think of that," said Faber.

"Even then," resumed Wingfold, "I should not say

you were wrong, if you were prepared to add that you had searched every possible region of existence, and had found no God; or that you had tried every theory man had invented, or even that you were able to invent yourself, and had found none of them consistent with the being of a God. I do not say that then you would be right in your judgment, for another man, of equal weight, might have had a different experience. I only say I would not then blame you. But you must allow it a very serious thing to assert as a conviction, without such grounds as the assertor has pretty fully satisfied himself concerning, what *could* only drive the sting of death ten times deeper."

The doctor was silent.

"I doubt not you spoke in a burst of indignation; but it seems to me the indignation of a man unaccustomed to ponder the things concerning which he expresses such a positive conviction."

"You are wrong there," returned Faber; "for I was brought up in the straitest sect of the Pharisees, and know what I am saying."

"The straitest sect of the Pharisees can hardly be the school in which to gather any such idea of a God as one could wish to be a reality."

"They profess to know."

"Is that any argument of weight, they and their opinions being what they are? If there be a God, do you imagine he would choose any strait sect under the sun to be his interpreters?"

"But the question is not of the idea of a God, but of the

existence of any, seeing, if he exists, he must be such as the human heart could never accept as God, inasmuch as he at least permits, if not himself enacts, cruelty. My argument to poor Spenser remains—however unwise or indeed cruel it may have been.”

“I grant it a certain amount of force—as much exactly as had gone to satisfy the children whom I heard the other day agreeing that Dr. Faber was a very cruel man, for he pulled out nurse’s tooth, and gave poor little baby such a nasty, nasty powder !”

“Is that a fair parallel? I must look at it.”

“I think it is. What you do is often unpleasant, sometimes most painful, but it does not follow that you are a cruel man, and a hurter instead of a healer of men.”

“I think there is a fault in the analogy,” said Faber. “For here am I nothing but a slave to laws already existing, and compelled to work according to them. It is not my fault, therefore, that the remedies I have to use are unpleasant. But if there be a God, he has the matter in his own hands.”

“There is weight and justice in your argument, which may well make the analogy appear at first sight false. But is there no theory possible that should make it perfect?”

“I do not see how there should be any. For, if you say that God is under any such compulsion as I am under, then surely the house is divided against itself, and God is not God any more.”

“For my part,” said the curate, “I think I *could* believe in a God who did but his imperfect best: in one

all power, and not all goodness, I could not believe. But suppose that the design of God involved the perfecting of men as the *children of God*—‘*I said ye are gods*’—that he would have them partakers of his own blessedness in kind—be as himself;—suppose his grand idea could not be contented with creatures perfect *only* by his gift, so far as that should reach, and having no willing causal share in the perfection—that is, partaking not at all of God’s individuality and free-will and choice of good;—then suppose that suffering were the only way through which the individual soul could be set, in separate and self-individuality, so far apart from God that it might *will*, and so become a partaker of his singleness and freedom; and suppose that this suffering must be and had been initiated by God’s taking his share, and that the infinitely greater share; suppose, next, that God saw the germ of a pure affection, say in your friend and his wife, but saw also that it was a germ so imperfect and weak that it could not encounter the coming frosts and winds of the world without loss and decay, while, if they were parted now for a few years, it would grow and strengthen and expand to the certainty of an infinitely higher and deeper and keener love through the endless ages to follow—so that by suffering should come, in place of contented decline, abortion, and death, a troubled birth of joyous result in health and immortality;—suppose all this, and what then?”

Faber was silent a moment, and then answered,

“Your theory has but one fault: it is too good to be true.”

“My theory leaves plenty of difficulty, but has no such fault as that. Why, what sort of a God would content you, Mr. Faber? The one idea is too bad, the other too good, to be true. Must you expand and pare until you get one exactly to the measure of yourself ere you can accept it as thinkable or possible? Why, a less God than that would not rest your soul a week. The only possibility of believing in a God seems to me to lie in finding an idea of a God large enough, grand enough, pure enough, lovely enough to be fit to believe in.”

“And have you found such, may I ask?”

“I think I am finding such.”

“Where?”

“In the man of the New Testament. I have thought a little more about these things, I fancy, than you have, Mr. Faber: I may come to be sure of something; I don't see how a man can ever be sure of *nothing*.”

“Don't suppose me quite dumbfounded, though I can't answer you off-hand,” said Mr. Faber, as they reached his door. “Come in with me, and I will make up the medicine myself; it will save time. There are a thousand difficulties,” he resumed in the surgery, “some of them springing from peculiar points that come before one of my profession, which I doubt if you would be able to meet so readily. But about this poor fellow Lingard: know Glaston gossip says he is out of his mind.”

“If I were you, Mr. Faber, I would not take pains to contradict it. He is not out of his mind, but has such trouble in it as might well drive him out. Don't you even hint at that, though.”

"I understand," said Faber.

"If doctor and minister did understand each other and work together," said Wingfold, "I fancy a good deal more might be done."

"I don't doubt it. What sort of fellow is that cousin of theirs—Bascombe is his name, I believe?"

"A man to suit you, I should think," said the curate; "a man with a most tremendous power of believing in nothing."

"Come, come!" returned the doctor, "you don't know half enough about me to tell what sort of man I should like or dislike."

"Well, all I will say more of Bascombe is that if he were not conceited, he would be honest; and if he were as honest as he believes himself, he would not be so ready to judge every one dishonest who does not agree with him."

"I hope we may have another talk soon," said the doctor, searching for a cork. "Some day I may tell you a few things that may stagger you."

"Likely enough: I am only learning to walk yet," said Wingfold. "But a man may stagger and not fall, and I am ready to hear any thing you choose to tell me."

Faber handed him the bottle, and he took his leave.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

HELEN AND THE CURATE.

BEFORE the morning, Leopold lay wound in the net of a low fever, almost as ill as ever, but with this difference, that his mind was far less troubled, and that even his most restless dreams no longer scared him awake to a still nearer assurance of misery. And yet many a time, as she watched by his side, it was excruciatingly plain to Helen that the stuff of which his dreams were made was the last process to the final execution of the law. She thought she could follow it all in his movements and the expressions of his countenance. At a certain point the cold dew always appeared on his forehead, after which invariably came a smile, and he would be quiet until near morning, when the same signs again appeared. Sometimes he would murmur prayers, and sometimes it seemed to Helen that he must fancy himself talking face to face with Jesus, for the look of blessed and trustful awe upon his countenance was amazing in its beauty.

For Helen herself, she was prey to a host of change-ful emotions. At one time she accused herself bitterly of having been the cause of the return of his illness; the next a gush of gladness would swell her heart at the thought that now she had him at least safer for a while, and that he might die and so escape the whole crowd of horrible possibilities. For George's manipulation of the magistrate could but delay the disclosure of the truth; even should no discovery be made, Leopold must at length suspect a trick, and that would at once drive him to fresh action.

But amongst the rest, a feeling which had but lately begun to indicate its far-off presence now threatened to bring with it a deeper and more permanent sorrow: it became more and more plain to her that she had taken the evil part against the one she loved best in the world; that she had been as a Satan to him; had driven him back, stood almost bodily in the way to turn him from the path of peace. Whether the path he had sought to follow was the only one or not, it was the only one he knew; and that it was at least a true one was proved by the fact that he had already found in it the beginnings of the peace he sought; while she, for the avoidance of shame and pity, for the sake of the family, as she had said to herself, had pursued a course which if successful would at best have resulted in shutting him up as in a madhouse with his own inborn horrors, with vain remorse, and equally vain longing. Her conscience, now that her mind was quieter, from the greater distance to which the threatening peril had

again withdrawn, had taken the opportunity of speaking louder. And she listened, but still with one question ever presented: Why might he not appropriate the consolations of the gospel without committing the suicide of surrender? She could not see that confession was the very door of refuge and safety towards which he must press.

George's absence was now again a relief, and while she feared and shrank from the severity of Wingfold, she could not help a certain indescribable sense of safety in his presence—at least so long as Leopold was too ill to talk.

For the curate, he became more and more interested in the woman who could love so strongly and yet not entirely, who suffered and must still suffer so much, and whom a faith even no greater than his own might render comparatively blessed. The desire to help her grew and grew in him, but he could see no way of reaching her. And then he began to discover one peculiar advantage belonging to the little open chamber of the pulpit—open not only or specially to heaven above, but to so many of the secret chambers of the souls of the congregation. For what a man dares not, could not if he dared, and dared not if he could, say to another even at the time and in the place fittest of all, he can say thence, open-faced, before the whole congregation, and the person in need thereof may hear it without umbrage or the choking husk of individual application, irritating to the rejection of what truth may lie in it for him. Would that our pulpits were all in the power of such

men as by suffering know the human, and by obedience the divine heart ! Then would the office of instruction be no more mainly occupied by the press, but the faces of true men would everywhere be windows for the light of the Spirit to enter other men's souls, and the voice of their words would follow with the forms of what truth they saw, and the power of the Lord would speed from heart to heart. Then would men soon understand that not the form of even soundest words availeth any thing, but a new creature.

When Wingfold was in the pulpit, then, he could speak as from the secret to the secret ; but elsewhere he felt, in regard to Helen, like a transport-ship filled with troops, which must go sailing around the shores of an invaded ally, in frustrate search for a landing. Oh ! to help that woman, that the light of life might go up in her heart and her cheek bloom again with the rose of peace ! But not a word could he speak in her presence, for he heard every thing he would have said as he thought it would sound to her, and therefore he had no utterance. Is it an infirmity of certain kinds of men, or a wise provision for their protection, that the brightest forms the truth takes in their private cogitations seem to lose half their lustre and all their grace when uttered in the presence of an unreceptive nature, and they hear, as it were, their own voice reflected in a poor, dull, in-harmonious echo, and are disgusted ?

But, on the other hand, ever in the pauses of the rushing, ever in the watery gleams of life that broke through the clouds and drifts of the fever, Leopold,

sought his friend, and, finding him, shone into a brief radiance, or, missing him, gloomed back into the land of visions. The tenderness of the curate's service, the heart that showed itself in every thing he did, even in the turn and expression of the ministering hand, was a kind of revelation to Helen. For while his intellect was hanging about the door, asking questions, and uneasily shifting hither and thither in its unloved perplexities, the spirit of the Master had gone by it unseen, and entered into the chamber of his heart.

After preaching the sermon last recorded, there came a reaction of doubt and depression on the mind of the curate, greater than usual. Had he not gone farther than his right? Had he not implied more conviction than was his? Words could not go beyond his satisfaction with what he found in the gospel, or the hopes for the range of his conscious life springing therefrom, but was he not now making people suppose him more certain of the *fact* of these things than he was? He was driven to console himself with the reflection that so long as he had had no such intention, even if he had been so carried away by the delight of his heart as to give such an impression, it mattered little: what was it to other people what he believed or how he believed? If he had not been untrue to himself, no harm would follow. Was a man never to talk from the highest in him to the forgetting of the lower? Was a man never to be carried beyond himself and the regions of his knowledge? If so, then farewell poetry and prophecy—yea, all grand discovery! for things must be foreseen ere they can

be realized—apprehended ere they be comprehended. This much he could say for himself, and no more: that he was ready to lay down his life for the mere *chance*, if he might so use the word, of these things being true; nor did he argue any devotion in that, seeing life without them would be to him a waste of unreality. He could bear witness to no facts, but to the truth, to the loveliness and harmony and righteousness and safety that he saw in the idea of the Son of Man—as he read it in the story. He dared not say what, in a time of persecution, torture might work upon him, but he felt right hopeful that, even were he base enough to deny him, any cock might crow him back to repentance. At the same time he saw plain enough that even if he gave his body to be burned, it were no sufficing assurance of his Christianity: nothing could satisfy him of that less than the conscious presence of the perfect charity. Without that he was still outside the kingdom, wandering in a dream around its walls.

Difficulties went on presenting themselves; at times he would be whelmed in the tossing waves of contradiction and impossibility; but still his head would come up into the air, and he would get a breath before he went down again. And with every fresh conflict, every fresh gleam of doubtful victory, the essential idea of the Master looked more and more lovely. And he began to see the working of his doubts on the growth of his heart and soul—both widening and realizing his faith, and preventing it from becoming faith in an idea of God instead


of in the living God—the God beyond as well as in the heart that thought and willed and imagined.

He had much time for reflection as he sat silent by the bedside of Leopold. Sometimes Helen would be sitting near, though generally when he aried she went out for her walk, but never anything came to him he could utter to her. And she was one of those who learn little from other people. A change must pass upon her ere she could be rightly receptive. Some vapor or other that clouded her being must be driven to the winds first.

Mrs. Ramshorn had become at least reconciled to the frequent presence of the curate, partly from the testimony of Helen, partly from the witness of her own eyes to the quality of his ministrations. She was by no means one of the loveliest among women, yet she had a heart, and could appreciate some kinds of goodness which the arrogance of her relation to the church did not interfere to hide—for nothing is so deadening to the divine as an habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things—and she became half friendly and quite courteous when she met the curate on the stair, and would now and then, when she thought of it, bring him a glass of wine as he sat by the bedside.

CHAPTER LXXV.

AN EXAMINATION.

 HE acquaintance between the draper and the gate-keeper rapidly ripened into friendship. Very generally, as soon as he had shut his shop, Drew would walk to the park gate to see Polwarth; and three times a week at least, the curate made one of the party. Much was then talked, more was thought, and, I venture to say, more yet was understood.

One evening the curate went earlier than usual, and had tea with the Polwarths.

“Do you remember,” he asked of his host, “once putting to me the question, what our Lord came into this world for?”

“I do,” answered Polwarth.

“And you remember I answered you wrong: I said it was to save the world?”

“I do. But remember, I said *primarily*; for of course he did come to save the world.”

“ Yes, just so you put it. Well, I think I can answer the question correctly now; and in learning the true answer, I have learned much. Did he not come first of all to do the will of his Father? Was not his Father first with him always and in every thing—his fellowmen next; for they were his Father’s?”

“ I need not say it—you know that you are right. Jesus is tenfold a real person to you, is he not, since you discovered that truth?”

“ I think so; I hope so. It does seem as if a grand, simple reality had begun to dawn upon me out of the fog—the form as of a man pure and simple, *because* the eternal son of the Father.”

“ And now, may I not ask, are you able to accept the miracles, things in themselves so improbable?”

“ If we suppose the question settled as to whether the man was what he said, then all that remains is to ask whether the works reported of him are consistent with what you can see of the character of the man.”

“ And to you they seem—?”

“ Some consistent, others not. Concerning the latter I look for more light.”

“ Meantime let me ask you a question about them: What was the main object of the miracles?”

“ One thing at least I have learned, Mr. Polwarth, and that is not to answer any question of yours in a hurry,” said Wingfold. “ I will, if you please, take this one home with me, and hold the light to it.”

“ Do,” said Polwarth, “ and you will find it return you

the light threefold. One word more ere Mr. Drew comes : do you still think of giving up your curacy ?”

“I have almost forgotten I ever thought of such a thing. Whatever energies I may or may not have, I know one thing for certain : that I could not devote them to any thing else I should think entirely worth doing. Indeed, nothing else seems interesting enough, nothing to repay the labor, but the telling of my fellow-men about the one man who is the truth, and to know whom is the life. Even if there be no hereafter, I would live my time believing in a grand thing that ought to be true if it is not. No facts can take the place of truths ; and if these be not truths, then is the loftiest part of our nature a waste. Let me hold by the better than the actual, and fall into nothingness off the same precipice with Jesus and John and Paul and a thousand more, who were lovely in their lives, and with their death make even the nothingness into which they have passed like the garden of the Lord. I will go farther, Polwarth, and say I would rather die forevermore believing as Jesus believed, than live forevermore believing as those that deny him. If there be no God, I feel assured that this existence is and could be but a chaos of contradictions whence can emerge nothing worthy to be called a truth, nothing worth living for.—No, I will not give up my curacy. I will teach that which *is* good, even if there should be no God to make a fact of it, and I will spend my life on it in the growing hope, which *may* become assurance, that there is indeed a perfect God, worthy of being the Father of Jesus Christ, and that it was *because*

they are true that these things were lovely to me and to so many men and women, of whom some have died for them and some would be yet ready to die."

"I thank my God to hear you say so. Nor will you stand still there," said Polwarth. "But here comes Mr. Drew."

CHAPTER LXXVI.

IMMORTALITY.

HOW goes business?" said Polwarth, when the new-comer had seated himself.

"That is hardly a question I look for from you, sir," returned the draper, smiling all over his round face, which looked more than ever like a moon of superior intelligence. "For me, I am glad to leave it behind me in the shop."

"True business can never be left in any shop. It is a care, white or black, that sits behind every horseman."

"That is fact; and with me it has just taken a new shape," said Drew, "for I have come with quite a fresh difficulty. Since I saw you last, Mr. Polwarth, a strange and very uncomfortable doubt has rushed in upon me, and I find myself altogether unfit to tackle it. I have no weapons—not a single argument of the least weight. I wonder if it be a law of nature that no sooner shall a man get into a muddle with one thing, than a thousand other muddles shall come pouring in upon him, as if Muddle itself were going to swallow him up! Here am I

just beginning to get a little start in honest ways, when up comes the ugly head of the said doubt, swelling itself more and more to look like a fact—namely, that after this world there is nothing for us; nothing at all to be had anyhow; that as we came, so we go: into life, out of life; that, having been nothing before, we shall be nothing after! The flowers come back in the spring and the corn in the autumn, but they ain't the same flowers or the same corn. They're just as different as the new generations of men."

"There's no pretence that we come back either. We only think we don't go into the ground, but away somewhere else."

"You can't prove that."

"No."

"And you don't know any thing about it!"

"Not much—but enough, I think."

"Why, even those that profess to believe it, scoff at the idea of an apparition—a ghost!"

"That's the fault of the ghosts, I suspect—or their reporters. I don't care about them myself. I prefer the tale of one who, they say, rose again and brought his body with him."

"Yes; but he was only one!"

"Except two or three whom, they say, he brought to life."

"Still there are but three or four."

"To tell you the truth, I do not care much to argue the point with you. It is by no means a matter of the *first* importance whether we live forever or not."

“Mr. Polwarth!” exclaimed the draper, in such astonishment mingled with horror as proved he was not in immediate danger of becoming an advocate of the doctrine of extinction.

The gate-keeper smiled what, but for a peculiar expression of undefinable good in it, might have been called a knowing smile.

“Suppose a thing were in itself not worth having,” he said, “would it be any great enhancement of it as a gift to add the assurance that the possession of it was eternal? Most people think it a fine thing to have a bit of land to call their own and leave to their children; but suppose a stinking and undrainable swamp, full of foul springs: what consolation would it be to the proprietor of that to know, while the world lasted, not a human being would once dispute its possession with any fortunate descendant holding it?”

The draper only stared, but his stare was a thorough one. The curate sat waiting, with both amusement and interest, for what would follow; he saw the direction in which the little man was driving.

“You astonish me!” said Mr. Drew, recovering his mental breath. “How can you compare God’s gift to such a horrible thing! Where should we be without life?”

Rachel burst out laughing, and the curate could not help joining her. “Mr. Drew,” said Polwarth half merrily, “are you going to help me drag my chain out to its weary length, or are you too much shocked at the

doubtful condition of its first links to touch them? I promise you the last shall be of bright gold."

"I beg your pardon," said the draper; "I might have known you didn't mean it."

"On the contrary, I mean every thing I say, and that literally. Perhaps I don't mean every thing you fancy I mean. Tell me, then, would life be worth having on any and every possible condition?"

"Certainly not."

"You know some, I dare say, who would be glad to be rid of life such as it is, and such as they suppose it must continue?"

"I don't."

"I do."

"I have always understood that every body clung to life."

"Most people do; every body certainly does not: Job, for instance."

"They say that is but a poem."

"*But* a poem! *Even* a poem—a representation true not of this or that individual, but of the race! There *are* such persons as would gladly be rid of life, and in their condition all would feel the same. Somewhat similar is the state of those who profess unbelief in the existence of God: none of them expect, and few of them seem to wish, to live forever! At least so I am told."

"That is no wonder," said the draper; "if they don't believe in God, I mean."

"Then there I have you! There you allow life to be not worth having, if on certain evil conditions."

"I admit it, then."

"And I repeat that to prove life endless is not a matter of the *first* importance. And now I will go a little farther. Does it follow that life is worth having because a man would like to have it forever?"

"I should say so : who should be a better judge than the man himself?"

"Let us look at it a moment. Suppose—we will take a strong case—suppose a man whose whole delight is in cruelty, and who has such plentiful opportunity of indulging the passion that he finds it well with him ; such a man, of course, would desire such a life to endure forever : is such a life worth having ? were it well that man should be immortal?"

"Not for others."

"Still less, I say, for himself."

"In the judgment of others, doubtless ; but to himself he would be happy."

"Call his horrible satisfaction happiness, then, and leave aside the fact that in his own nature it is a horror and not a bliss : a time must come when, in the exercise of his delight, he shall have destroyed all life beside, and made himself alone with himself in an empty world : will he then find life worth having ?"

"Then he ought to live for punishment."

"With that we have nothing to do now, but there you have given me an answer to my question, whether a man's judgment that his life is worth having proves immortality a thing to be desired."

"I have. I understand now,"

“It follows that there is something of prior importance to the possession of immortality: what is that something?”

“I suppose that the immortality itself should be worth possessing.”

“Yes; that the life should be such that it were well it should be endless. And what then if it be not such?”

“The question then would be whether it could not be made such.”

“You are right. And wherein consists the essential inherent worthiness of a life as life? The only perfect idea of life is—a unit, self-existent and creative. That is God, the only one. But to this idea, in its kind, must every life, to be complete as life, correspond; and the human correspondence to self-existence is that the man should round and complete himself by taking into himself his origin; by going back and in his own will adopting that origin, rooting therein afresh in the exercise of his own freedom and in all the energy of his own self-roused will; in other words, that the man say, ‘I will be after the will of the creating I;’ that he see and say with his whole being that to will the will of God in himself and for himself and concerning himself is the highest possible condition of a man. Then has he completed his cycle by turning back upon his history, laying hold of his cause, and willing his own being in the will of the only I AM. This is the rounding, re-creating, unifying of the man. This is religion; and all that gathers not with this, scatters abroad.”

“And then,” said Drew, with some eagerness, “law-

fully comes the question, ' Shall I or shall I not live for ever? ' "

" Pardon me ; I think not," returned the little prophet. " I think rather we have done with it forever. The man with life so in himself will not dream of asking whether he shall live. It is only in the twilight of a half-life, holding in it at once much wherefore it should desire its own continuance and much that renders it unworthy of continuance, that the doubtful desire of immortality can arise. Do you remember"—here Polwarth turned to Wingfold—" my mentioning to you once a certain manuscript of strange interest—to me, at least, and Rachel—which a brother of mine left behind him? "

" I remember it perfectly," answered the curate.

" It seems so to mingle with all I ever think on this question that I should much like, if you gentlemen would allow me, to read some extracts from it."

Nothing could have been heartier than the assurance of both the men that they could but be delighted to listen to any thing he chose to give them.

" I must first tell you, however," said Polwarth, " merely to protect you from certain disturbing speculations otherwise sure to present themselves, that my poor brother was mad, and that what I now read portions of seemed to him no play of the imagination, but a record of absolute fact. Some parts are stranger and less intelligible than others, but through it all there is abundance of intellectual movement and what seems to me a wonderful keenness to perceive the movements and

arrest the indications of an imagined consciousness."

As he spoke, the little man was opening a cabinet in which he kept his precious things. He brought from it a good-sized quarto volume, neatly bound in morocco, with gilt edges, which he seemed to handle not merely with respect but with tenderness.

The heading of the next chapter is my own, and does not belong to the manuscript.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

PASSAGES FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE WANDERING JEW.



HAVE at length been ill, very ill, once more, and for many reasons foreign to the weightiest, which I had forgotten, I had hoped that I was going to die. But therein I am as usual deceived and disappointed. That I have been out of my mind I know by having returned to the real knowledge of what I am. The conscious present has again fallen together and made a whole with the past, and that whole is my personal identity.

“How I broke loose from the bonds of a madness which, after so many and heavy years of uninterrupted sanity, had at length laid hold upon me, I will now relate.

“I had, as I have said, been very ill—with some sort of fever that had found fit rooting in a brain overwearyed from not having been originally constructed to last so long. Whether it came not of an indwelling demon, or a legion of demons, I can not tell—God knows. Surely I was as one possessed. I was mad, whether for years or but for moments—who can tell? I can not.

Verily it seems for many years ; but, knowing well the truth concerning the relations of time in him that dreameth and waketh from his dream, I place no confidence in the testimony of the impressions left upon my seeming memory. I can, however, trust it sufficiently as to the character of the illusions that then possessed me. I imagined myself an Englishman called Polwarth, of an ancient Cornish family. Indeed, I had in my imagination as Polwarth gone through the history, every day of it, with its sunrise and sunset, of more than half a lifetime. I had a brother who was deformed and a dwarf, and a daughter who was like him ; and the only thing throughout the madness that approached a consciousness of my real being and history was the impression that these things had come upon me because of a certain grievous wrong I had at one time committed, which wrong, however, I had quite forgotten—and could ill have imagined in its native hideousness.

“ ‘But one morning, just as I woke, after a restless night filled with dreams, I was aware of a half-embodied shadow in my mind—whether thought or memory or imagination I could not tell, and the strange thing was that it darkly radiated from it the conviction that I must hold and identify it, or be forever lost to myself. Therefore, with all the might of my will to retain the shadow, and all the energy of my recollection to recall that of which it was the vague shadow, I concentrated the whole powers of my spiritual man upon the phantom thought, to fix and retain it.

“ ‘Every one knows what it is to hunt such a form-

less fact. Evanescent as a rainbow, its whole appearance, from the first is that of a thing in the act of vanishing. It is a thing that *was* known, but, from the moment consciousness turned its lantern upon it, began to become invisible. For a time during the close pursuit that follows, it seems only to be turning corner after corner to evade the mind's eye, but behind every corner it leaves a portion of itself; until at length, although when finally can not be told, it is gone so utterly that the mind remains aghast in the perplexity of the doubt whether ever there was a thought there at all.

“Throughout my delusion of an English existence, I had been tormented in my wakings with such thought-phantoms, and ever had I followed them as an idle man may follow a flitting marsh-fire. Indeed, I had grown so much interested in the phenomenon and its possible indications that I had invented various theories to account for them, some of which seemed to myself original and ingenious, while the common idea that they are vague reminiscences of a former state of being I had again and again examined, and as often entirely rejected as in no way tenable or verisimilar.

“But upon the morning to which I have referred, I succeeded, for the first time, in fixing, capturing, identifying the haunting, fluttering thing. That moment the bonds of my madness were broken. My past returned upon me. I had but to think in any direction, and every occurrence, with time and place and all its circumstance, rose again before me. The awful fact of my own being once more stood bare—awful always, tenfold

more awful after such a period of blissful oblivion thereof: I was, I had been, I am now, as I write, the man so mysterious in crime, so unlike all other men in his punishment, known by various names in various lands—here in England as the Wandering Jew. Ahasuerus was himself again, alas!—himself and no other. Wife, daughter, brother vanished, and returned only in dreams. I was and remain the wanderer, the undying, the repentant, the unforgiven. O heart! O weary feet! O eyes that have seen and nevermore shall see, until they see once and are blinded forever! Back upon my soul rushes the memory of my deed like a storm of hail mingled with fire, flashing through every old dry channel, that it throbs and writhes anew, scorched at once and torn with the poisonous burning.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE WANDERING JEW.

IT was a fair summer morning in holy Jerusalem, and I sat and wrought at my trade—for I sewed a pair of sandals for the feet of the high-priest Caiaphas. And I wrought diligently, for it behoved me to cease an hour ere set of sun ; for it was the day of preparation for the eating of the Passover.

“ Now all that night there had been a going to and fro in the city, for the chief priests and their followers had at length laid hands upon him that was called Jesus, whom some believed to be the Messiah, and others, with my fool-self amongst them, an arch impostor and blasphemer. For I was of the house of Caiaphas, and heartily did he desire that the man my lord declared a deceiver of the people should meet with the just reward of his doings. Thus I sat and worked, and thought and rejoiced ; and the morning passed, and the noon came.

“ It was a day of sultry summer, and the street

burned beneath the sun, and I sat in the shadow and looked out upon the glare, and ever I wrought at the sandals of my lord with many fine stitches, in cunning workmanship. All had been for some time very still, when suddenly I thought I heard a far-off tumult. And soon came the idle children, who ever run first that they be not swallowed up of the crowd; and they ran, and looked behind as they ran. And after them came the crowd, crying and shouting, and swaying hither and thither; and in the midst of it arose the one arm of a cross, beneath the weight of which that same Jesus bent so low that I saw him not. Truly, said I, he hath not seldom borne heavier burdens in the workshop of his father the Galilean, but now his sins and his idleness have found him, and taken from him his vigor; for he that despiseth the law shall perish, while they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. For I was wroth with the man who taught the people to despise the great ones that administered the law, and give honor to the small ones who only kept it. Besides, he had driven my father's brother from the court of the Gentiles with a whip, which truly hurt him not outwardly, but stung him to the soul; and yet that very temple which he pretended thus to honor, he had threatened to destroy and build again in three days! Such were the thoughts of my heart; and when I learned from the boys that it was in truth Jesus of Nazareth who passed on his way to Calvary to be crucified, my heart leaped within me at the thought that the law had at length overtaken the male-

factor. I laid down the sandal and my awl, and rose and went forth and stood in the front of my shop. And Jesus drew nigh, and as he passed, lo! the end of the cross dragged upon the street. And one in the crowd came behind and lifted it up and pushed therewith, so that Jesus staggered and had nigh fallen. Then would he fain have rested the arm of the cross on the stone by which I was wont to go up into my shop from the street. But I cried out and drove him thence, saying scornfully, *Go on, Jesus; go on. Truly thou restest not on stone of mine!* Then he turned his eyes upon me, and said, *I go indeed, but thou goest not,* and therewith he rose again under the weight of the cross, and staggered on.

“‘And I followed in the crowd to Calvary.’”

Here the reader paused, and said,

“I can give you but a few passages now. You see it is a large manuscript. I will therefore choose some of those that bear upon the subject of which we have been talking. A detailed account of the crucifixion follows here, which I could not bring myself to read aloud. The eclipse is in it, and the earthquake, and the white faces of the risen dead gleaming through the darkness about the cross. It ends thus:

“‘And all the time, I stood not far from the foot of the cross, nor dared go nearer; for around it were his mother and they that were with her, and my heart was sore for her also. And I would have withdrawn my foot from the place where I stood, and gone home to weep, but something, I know not what, held me there, as it were, rooted to the ground. At length the end was

drawing near. He opened his mouth and spake to his mother and the disciple who stood by her, but truly I know not what he said ; for as his eyes turned from them, they looked upon me, and my heart died within me. He said naught, but his eyes had that in them that would have slain me with sorrow had not death, although I knew it not, already shrunk from my presence, daring no more come nigh such a malefactor.—O Death, how gladly would I build thee a temple, set thee in a lofty place, and worship thee with the sacrifice of vultures on a fire of dead men's bones, wouldst thou but hear my cry ! —But I rave again in my folly. God forgive me. All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come.—With that look—a well of everlasting tears in my throbbing brain—my feet were unrooted, and I turned and fled.

Here the reader paused again, and turned over many leaves.

“ . . . And ever as I passed at night through the lands, when I came to a cross by the wayside, thereon would I climb, and, winding my arms about its arms and my feet about its stem, would there hang in the darkness or the moon, in rain or hail, in wind or snow or frost, until my sinews gave way and my body dropped, and I knew no more until I found myself lying at its foot in the morning. For, ever in such case, I lay without sense until again the sun shone upon me.

“ . . . And if ever the memory of that look passed from me, then straightway I began to long

for death, and so longed until the memory and the power of the look came again, and with the sorrow in my soul came the patience to live. And truly, although I speak of forgetting and remembering, such motions of my spirit in me were not as those of another man ; in me they are not measured by the scale of men's lives : they are not of years, but of centuries ; for the seconds of my life are ticked by a clock whose pendulum swings through an arc of motionless stars.

“ . . . Once I had a vision of Death. Methinks it must have been a precursive vapor of the madness that afterwards enfolded me, for I know well that there is not one called Death, that he is but a word needful for the weakness of human thought and the poverty of human speech ; that he is a no-being, and but a change from that which is. I had a vision of Death, I say.

“ I was walking over a wide plain of sand, like Egypt, so that ever and anon I looked around me to see if nowhere, from the base of the horizon, the pyramids cut their triangle out of the blue night of heaven ; but I saw none. The stars came down and sparkled on the dry sands, and all was waste and wide desolation. The air also was still as the air of a walled-up tomb, where there are but dry bones, and not even the wind of an evil vapor that rises from decay. And through the dead air came ever the low moaning of a distant sea, towards which my feet did bear me. I had been journeying thus for years, and in their lapse it had grown but a little louder. Suddenly I was aware that I was not alone. A

dim figure strode beside me, vague, but certain of presence. And I feared him not, seeing that which men fear the most was itself that which by me was the most desired. So I stood and turned and would have spoken. But the shade that seemed not a shadow went on and regarded me not. Then I also turned again towards the moaning of the sea and went on. And lo! the shade which had gone before until it seemed but as a vapor among the stars, was again by my side walking. And I said, and stood not, but walked on: "Thou shade that art not a shadow, seeing there shineth no sun or moon, and the stars are many, and the one slayeth the shadow of the other, what art thou, and wherefore goest thou by my side? Think not to make me afraid, for I fear nothing in the universe but that which I love the best." (I spake of the eyes of the Lord Jesus.) Then the shade that seemed no shadow answered me, and spake and said, "Little knowest thou what I am, seeing the very thing thou sayest I am not, that I am, and naught else, and there is no other but me. I am Shadow, the shadow, the only shadow—none such as those from which the light hideth in terror, yet like them, for life hideth from me and turneth away; yet if life were not, neither were I, for I am nothing; and yet again, so soon as any thing is, there am I, and needed no maker, but came of myself, for I am Death." "Ha! Death!" I cried, and would have cast myself before him with outstretched arms of worshipful entreaty; but lo! there was a shadow upon the belt of Orion, and no shadow by my side! and I sighed, and walked on towards the ever-moaning sea. Then

again the shadow was by my side. And again I spake and said, "Thou thing of flitting and return, I despise thee, for thou wilt not abide the conflict." And I would have cast myself upon him and wrestled with him there, for defeat and not for victory. But I could not lay hold upon him. "Thou art a powerless nothing," I cried; "I will not even defy thee." "Thou wouldst provoke me," said the shadow, "but it availeth not. I can not be provoked. Truly I am but a shadow, yet know I my own worth, for I am the Shadow of the Almighty, and where he is, there am I." "Thou art nothing," I said. "Nay, nay, I am not Nothing. Thou, nor any man—God only knoweth what that word meaneth. I am but the shadow of Nothing, and when *thou* sayest *nothing*, thou meanest only me; but what God meaneth when he sayeth *Nothing*—the nothing without him, that nothing which is no shadow but the very substance of Unbeing—no created soul can know." "Then art thou not Death?" I asked. "I am what thou thinkest of when thou sayest *Death*," he answered, "but I am not Death." "Alas! then, why comest thou to me in the desert places, for I did think thou wast Death indeed, and couldst take me unto thee so that I should be no more." "That is what death can not do for thee," said the shadow; "none but he that created thee can cause that thou shouldst be no more. Thou art until he will that thou be not. I have heard it said amongst the wise that, hard as it is to create, it is harder still to uncreate. Truly I can not tell. But wouldst thou be uncreated by the hand of Death? Wouldst thou have thy no-being the gift of a shadow?" Then I thought of the

eyes of the Lord Jesus, and the look he cast upon me, and I said, "No : I would not be carried away of Death, I would be fulfilled of Life, and stand before God forever." Then once again the belt of Orion grew dim, and I saw the shadow no more. And yet did I long for Death, for I thought he might bring me to those eyes, and the pardon that lay in them.

* * * * *

"But again, as the years went on and each brought less hope than that before it, I forgot the look the Lord had cast upon me, and in the weariness of the life that was mortal and yet would not cease, in the longing after the natural end of that which against nature endured, I began to long even for the end of being itself. And in a city of the Germans I found certain men of my own nation who said unto me, "Fear not, Ahasuerus ; there is no life beyond the grave. Live on until thy end come, and cease thy complaints. Who is there among us who would not gladly take upon him thy judgment, and live until he was weary of living?" "Yea, but to live after thou art weary?" I said. But they heeded me not, answering me and saying, "Search thou the Scriptures, even the Book of the Law, and see if thou find there one leaf of this gourd of a faith that hath sprung up in a night. Verily, this immortality is but a flash in the brain of men that would rise above their fate. Sayeth Moses, or sayeth Job, or sayeth David or Daniel a word of the matter?" And I listened unto them, and became of their mind. But therewithal the longing after death returned with tenfold force, and I rose up and girt my